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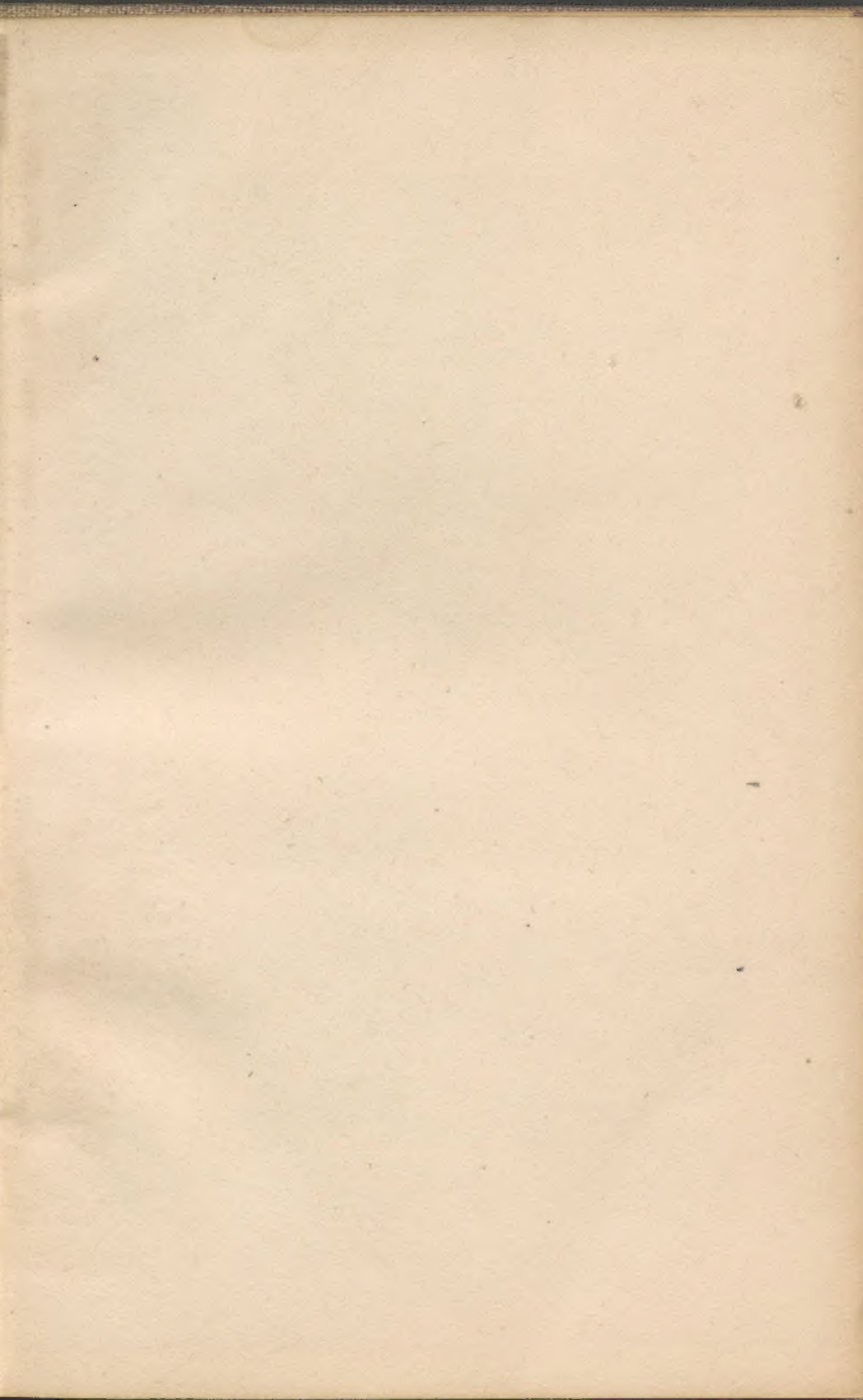
















FRONTISPIECE.

# PAUL KENT,

#7884

THE

## CHOIR BOY.

BY

A. M. MITCHELL.

35

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"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."



PHILADELPHIA:

RICHARD McCAULEY,

1314 CHESTNUT STREET.

1869.

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## PREFACE.

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*Dear Children of the Church :*

I HAVE just a word to say, before I commence my story, which is all for you.

It is the custom in some of our American churches, for the choir to be composed of boys—in number, commonly from thirty to forty—whose business it is to attend all the services held, and to chant the responses.

Paul Kent and Arthur Wiers were members of such a choir, and as I have related to you Paul's search after holiness, and have shown—far more faintly

than I could have desired—the sweetness of Arthur's life which was all given to God; I have ventured to hope that some of the children of the church, perceiving how these boys were led and encouraged by the services of the church, might learn through them to love and venerate our ancient and most beautiful Liturgy.

THE AUTHOR.



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# PAUL KENT.

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## CHAPTER I.

**P**AUL, there are the chimes?"

"I hear them."

"They have been ringing some time. You will be late if you do not start soon."

"I do not generally get late, and I have no thought of commencing to-day."

Paul Kent stood at an open window in the gathering twilight, reading, and so absorbed and intent was he upon his book, that when the evening chimes rang out upon the air, he seemed not to hear them, and although it was his duty to be at his post in the choir of the church when the bells ceased to sound, yet he read on, heedless of the passing moments.

His sister had spoken to him several times,

but without producing any effect, until at length a few minutes after the remonstrance with which the story began, the chimes ceased, and Paul threw down his book, seized his cap and ran quickly towards the church. It was fortunately only a short distance, and five minutes had not passed, when Paul was standing in the room appropriated to the singers, hurrying on his surplice. The boys had gone to their seats, and he stepped across the threshold of the church just as the last notes from the great organ died away among the arches. His late arrival and hurried entrance he knew were noticed by the master, and he had scarcely seated himself when he rose again with the others as the service began. "The Lord is in his Holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him."

Paul tried to attend to this, and the prayers which followed, but his thoughts were not there, and while he knelt and endeavored to listen until he should join in the chant of the "amen" at the close, his mind was with the book which he had left so hastily, and once, when the voices around him rose in the solemn



chorus, his was not among them, for, for the moment, church, service, and companions had faded from his mind, and he was following the fortunes of the young sailor in whose adventures he had been so much interested.

He roused himself then, and in the "Gloria in Excelsis" that soon followed, he sang with all the power of his rich, clear voice, and then perceived for the first time that the place next his own was occupied by a new singer. It was a boy about ten years old, fair and delicate, with bright blue eyes and small slender hands, white and thin as though he were not always strong. He sang alto in a full, sweet voice, and his eyes were bent upon his book in a way which showed that he was enjoying to the full, both the words and the music. Paul never felt much interest in any one but himself, but he could not refrain from watching his young companion, with an intentness which was new for him to feel for any one.

The little fellow repeated in a whisper the prayers with the clergyman, and the "amens" were sung sweetly and seriously. Paul's attention was drawn away from the boy to

the prayers themselves, and he listened to the words of our beautiful evening service as he had never done before.

"Finally, we commend to Thy Fatherly goodness, all those who are any ways afflicted, or distressed, in mind, body, or estate; that it may please Thee to comfort and relieve them, according to their several necessities, giving them patience under their sufferings, and a happy issue out of all their afflictions."

Paul thought of his little sister Hallie who was blind, and felt that part of that prayer must have been intended for her; she was afflicted, and it prayed for such as she. He wondered suddenly why they never brought her to church, for he knew by instinct that she would love the service more than he did. When he rose from his knees he looked more attentively at his companion, and determined to ask him after service whether he really loved to sing every morning and evening in the choir. But his plans were frustrated, for no sooner had he reached the ante-room where he laid aside his surplice, than the master of the choir stepped towards him:



"Young Kent, you were late to-night, and came in very hurriedly."

"Yes sir," replied Paul, touching his cap, "I am sorry, sir."

"Well then, try and not repeat the offence. It is not only that I wish to have the boys in their places when the chimes cease, but you show much disrespect to the church and the service, and your mind is ill prepared for you to take holy words upon your lips. That is all. You may go now."

The boy passed out into the night air, and walked slowly homeward with a good deal to think about.

Paul Kent was not a bad boy, but he was a very selfish one, and in some way he had grown up with very little concern for the comfort of those around him. He had a widowed mother and two sisters, one of whom had been gradually losing her sight for some years, until now she was totally blind. He was used to his mother's little shop, his helpful sister Lottie, and his afflicted sister Hallie; but it never occurred to him that it was in any way his duty to share with them the

daily burden, and so long as he carried weekly to his mother the money which his service in the choir procured for him, he was satisfied. It may be that those at home sometimes thought differently, and would often have been glad of his assistance when he was lounging over the fire, reading. They said nothing, however, but lived on, asking his help when it was necessary, and at other times leaving him undisturbed. He took but very little interest, either, in his duties at the church. He was very fond of music, and occasionally when they were rehearsing a new anthem, would wake up to its beauty for a short time. But usually after the voluntary—to which he always listened—his part in the service was performed mechanically, with no thought as to its solemn purpose.

But to-night something had set him thinking: the words of the master for one thing, but more particularly the little boy who had kneeled beside him, and seemed so devout. Then too, the words still lingered in his mind, of the one prayer to which his attention had been attracted. For those “afflicted and

distressed," that "Thou wouldst comfort and relieve them." He wondered suddenly if God never chose people in the world to comfort and relieve others. While he was still turning this thought over and over in his mind, he came up to the door of his home and went in.

He hung up his hat in the little entry back of the store, and went on into the common room of the family, where his sister Lottie was busy over the stove preparing something for supper, and his little sister Hallie sat near with her hands folded together on her lap, and her face against the pillow of her chair. Lottie looked up from her work for a moment as he came in, but did not speak, and Hallie turned her head in a listening attitude for a moment and then said:

"Was that Paul?"

"Yes," replied the boy.

She laid her head back with a little sigh.

Paul stood for several minutes tapping his hands gently against the book which he had taken up, and then he said suddenly:

"Hallelu, did you ever hear the boys sing?"



"No," she answered, brightening, "but I should like to hear them. Is it pretty?"

"Very beautiful indeed, sometimes," he replied. "There are forty of them, and some of the finest voices in the city."

"How sweet," replied the child with an acute sense of the harmony she could not hear. "Perhaps I shall be able to hear them sometimes."

"Did I ever sing for you Hallie?" said Paul again, suddenly, with some vague sense of the words about "comfort and relief" to the "afflicted" running through his mind again.

"No," said Hallie, speaking gravely and gently in reply. With a sudden impulse he brought a chair near to her, and seating himself, began to sing the Psalm which had been chosen that evening at the service.

"Lord, forever at thy side,  
Let my place and portion be;  
Strip me of the robe of pride,  
Clothe me with humility."

Lottie moved softly, listening, until after a moment she left her work entirely, and

followed every word. Hallie caught her breath as he began, and then with her hands clasped together on her lap, she sat with her sightless eyes turned toward the singer, and the tears starting down her face.

The voice that sang was one of the finest. The tones were modulated to suit the room in which he sat, but the fulness and richness of the notes filled every corner, and the words were given as only one who knows perfectly how to adapt words to tunes ever *can* give. It was perfect. The air seemed filled with music, and even when he ceased to sing, the notes seemed lingering on the air. The silence for some moments was unbroken.

Then Lottie moved away, and Hallie said brokenly :

“Oh! Paul, that was so beautiful. I wish you would sing to me often.”

“I will, Hallie, any time you wish,” he returned, pleased with her pleasure.

She seized his hand, and thanked him gratefully, and then he left her, and went out into the store. His mother stood there look-

ing out through the window, but she turned as he came towards the door and spoke :

“ Paul, was that you I heard singing to Hallie ? ”

“ Yes, mother. ”

“ I wish you would do so often. It is such a relief and comfort to know some one is caring for her. Poor child ! she needs all the pleasure we can give her. ”

Here it was again—comfort and relief ! Paul stood at the door in a state of most profound astonishment, for full half an hour—in fact until the lamp began to glimmer in the houses near, and the darkness settled down, till he could see nothing but those tiny rays of light. Then he went in and spent the remainder of the evening over his book.

He took care to be in full time the next morning, and was waiting in the ante-room some minutes before the chimes ceased, and it was time to go in. As they were called at last, and he stepped toward the choir, he perceived some one beside him, and looking round saw his little friend of yesterday.



The boy looked up at him and bade him timidly, "good morning."

Paul said "good morning" in return, and held out his hand, which was taken and held until they were seated. There was a stranger in the reading-desk this morning, and it was some minutes before he was prepared to commence the service, and the boys, especially our two friends, were so busily occupied in watching the stranger that they forgot their own duties, and were not roused to attention until the organ ceased, and the opening sentences of the services began.

Then, suddenly, Paul heard an earnest whisper close beside him :

"Oh ! if you please, I've left my book in the ante-room. What shall I do?"

"Hush" said Paul, instantly fearing that the master would discover the whisper, which was in disobedience to rules ; and then he did what he had never been known to do before—pushed his book forward until it rested between them, and both had the benefit of the music.

He had a grateful smile in return, and then

they both gave attention to the service. The first chapter read that morning was the sixth of Daniel, and the story which always attracts, was read so impressively this morning that every boy's ears were opened, and indeed there was not one in the house who was not interested more than usual in the beautiful history. Paul heard the caught breath of pleasure from the boy at his side, and found himself thinking over the wonderful deliverance as he sang the glorious "Te Deum" which followed.

"Vouchsafe O Lord, to keep us this day without sin."

I wonder what "vouchsafe" means, he said to himself, as the words arrested his attention. "I do not believe there is any one good enough to live even one day 'without sin' and yet it is a prayer. I have never sung it so. I wonder if I have done wrong!"

I do not believe Paul had ever asked himself such a question before, but this morning he could not help both listening and thinking.

He was forced to give his attention further as they knelt for prayers, for the little figure

at his side read the words in such a gentle, earnest whisper that Paul followed them half unconsciously.

"From all blindness of heart ; from pride, vain-glory and hypocrisy ; from envy, hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness."

And then the soft tones of the organ broke in upon the words, and the chant was given deeply and tenderly :

"Good Lord, deliver us !"

Paul knew what some of these evils were—not all—but he could tell here and elsewhere through the service, that they were most truly felt by the way in which the responses were given at his side.

"That it may please Thee to defend and provide for the fatherless children, and widows, and all who are desolate and oppressed."

Was not he a fatherless child ? Was not his mother a widow ? This prayer must be for him and his, and he was glad for a moment that he was kneeling, and that his voice joined in the response.

After prayers were over, and the clergy-



man was about to read the closing hymn, he hesitated a moment, and then stepped forward to the front of the chancel and spoke :

" I have a word to say," he said, clearly and distinctly, " to the boys who form the choir of the church."

He had the most absolute attention instantly, from those to whom he spoke.

" It is my wish and purpose," he continued, during the time I remain as pastor of this church, to meet the choir-boys once a week at my house, in order to become acquainted with each one, and give them such instruction as will fit them for the position they fill, by teaching them to understand and love the service in which they take a daily part. Therefore, I will be glad to see all those who wish to come, at my house on Saturday afternoon at three o'clock. We will continue our worship, by singing the fifty-second hymn :

" How beautiful are their feet,  
Who stand on Zion's hill."

The leaves were turned quickly, the music found, and the hymn sung, and then, after

they were dismissed, the boys gathered in knots, eagerly discussing the words of invitation they had heard. Paul stood listening a moment, and then as he moved off, some one beside him said :

" May I walk beside you ? I am Arthur Wiers."

Paul knew the voice. It had been beside him all the morning, and it was because he was fast learning to love the gentle child that he said so kindly :

" Yes, I would like to have you walk with me."

And then followed a conversation in which little Arthur took a pleased, eager part, and to which Paul listened in amazement, with only a word now and then.

" Isn't it beautiful to sing at service ?" said the boy.

" I don't know," replied Paul, " I've sung a long time."

" Have you ?" Well I suppose it seems different to me, for I cannot always get off to come to service, and I love it so ; but now you know when I have to be here I can hear

it twice a day. Do you think I have a good voice?"

"Very sweet and full," replied Paul, gently touched by his manner.

"Oh! I am glad you think so. Mother said I had, but I was afraid it was only because she loved me. But I must walk a little faster or she will wait for me to-night."

"Have you no father?" asked Paul.

"Oh! yes, I've a father, but he's away at work all day, and I help mother. Sister works in the factory."

"You do not look very strong," said Paul, gently, glancing at the thin hand which clasped his.

"No, I am not very strong, but I never say so at home. Mother is not always well and she loves to have me help her. If I should tell her that I felt ill sometimes, she would tire herself, you know, while she was making me rest. Have you any sisters?"

Paul, feeling very shame-faced to hear these unselfish words, knowing how little he did at home replied, "Yes, I've two sisters. One of them takes care of the house while in



mother keeps the store, and the other, a little girl about your own age, is blind."

"Dear little child! Does she go out?" he asked in a tender sympathising way which made Paul wish for the moment that Hallie could have heard it.

"Not often," he said, "for there is no one to go with her."

"But you bring her to service sometimes do you not? How she must love to hear the organ."

"I believe she has never heard it," said Paul, feeling himself suddenly very small and mean beside the little creature who walked at his side.

"Oh! you must bring her, just think how she would enjoy it."

Paul knew that, and it made him uncomfortable, so he changed the subject suddenly, by asking Arthur "if he was going to the minister's on Saturday."

"Yes," said Arthur, "I think so. I know Mr. Haldaday a little, and feel that his heart is in his holy work. Are you going?"

"Yes," returned Paul, "and if you wish

we will go together, and afterwards return to the evening prayers."

He was astonished at himself, as he said this, for he well knew that three days ago he would have laughed at the idea of going to the Saturday class.

"Oh! I do wish it, indeed," replied Arthur, bringing his thin hands together gleefully. "And now, I must leave you. See, there is my home just around the bend of the street, in that little low stone house."

Paul said "good bye" and went on homewards, with much to think about. He had good opportunity to exercise his thoughts, for his mother sent him far to the other end of the town on an errand, and he mused over all that had come to him so strangely that morning.

"From all blindness of heart." He wondered suddenly whether he had not been blind, that he had lived so long among those who needed his help without once offering aid. "From pride." Was he proud, that he had so long held himself aloof from his sisters and his young companions in the choir? It was a long sermon Paul read himself, and it wound

up with the tender way in which Arthur had spoken of Hallie.

And this was the result. He came in about an hour before the evening service, to find Hallie in her usual seat, and his mother sitting by the window. He crossed the room to his sister's chair, and taking her hand, bent over her, and said in a low voice,

"Hallie, are you well enough to walk?"

"Yes," she replied sadly, "but I cannot walk alone."

"How would you like to go to the church with me to-night? The organ will play you know, and the boys will sing."

"Oh! if I only could," she replied, with an instantaneous change of voice, and starting up eagerly, "Oh, Paul, if I *only* could!"

"Mother," said Paul, "can I take Hallie to evening prayers with me to-night?"

"I would like very much to have her go," said her mother, very gravely in reply. "Do you think you could take proper care of her?"

"As good as I know how mother," he replied, "and I will attend to the store if you remain while Lottie is dressing her."

It was a pleasure to Paul himself, thus for the first time to offer his aid ; but it would have been a better pleasure had he known how his mother's heart was relieved.

As for Hallie, she was fairly trembling with delight and pleasure, and when Paul took her hand and led her gently out into the open air, he felt for the first time how great her deprivation was, and was glad that he could do even so little to give her happiness. And he took pains to please her, talking all the way about the houses, the streets, of the church with its music, and lastly about his little friend who sang near him in the choir. So gently and kindly did he lead her, that she was not startled or made the least nervous by the confusion of the streets. When they reached the church he went directly to the master.

"Sir," he said, touching his cap ; "can I go in before the rest to-day ? I have a little sister with me and she is blind. I thought, perhaps, you would allow me to give her a seat, and sit by her until the boys come in."



"Certainly," he replied. "Do so, if you wish."

So when he took Hallie's hand again, it was to lead her into the church, and give her a seat in one corner of a pew. As he sat down beside her, he said :

"I will stay near you until the boys come in."

"You have your surplice on," she whispered, touching it as he seated himself.

"Yes, I may not go out again," he replied. Then he took her hand and pointed out to her the different parts of the church, the organ, and the marble font. He told her in a whisper, all about the famous window over the altar, how the glass was of many different colors, and as the sunlight struck through it the tints were repeated on the marble floor. There were several tablets upon the side walls telling of the dead who lay in the church-yard just outside, and he read to her gently the inscriptions upon these. He was still talking when the chimes ceased, and the boys came in.

"I must go now," he said, disengaging his

hand, "but you know I am just near ye in the choir, and I will come to you again as soon as I am dismissed." So he left her, and she sat very still, listening to every sound. She started once, and moved a little, as a lady came into the pew, but she felt a gentle hand on her arm, and a voice said, "Sit still, dear."

She was perfectly still in a moment, not much on account of what the lady had said, as that the organ had commenced its music, and she heard the first notes of the Voluntary. She sat as if in a trance, listening, drinking in the notes as they floated off and wandered with echoes of sound in among the arches which upheld the roof. The organ had chosen a soft, sweet movement of Beethoven's, suited to the time and place, and Hallie's rapture could hardly have been greater, could she have seen how the western sun sent its beams through the colored glasses, and checkered the floor and walls about the benches where the singers sat steady and attentive in their white dresses.

She rose with the rest of the congregation.

When the service began, and followed it through, sitting, kneeling or standing as they did. Once only did she forget herself, and that was at the close of the "Gloria in Excelsis." The sweet voices had so thrilled her, that for a moment she forgot where she was, and thought she had caught the notes of a triumphal song at the gates of the Heavenly City. So wrapt was she, that she stood still after it ceased, and only recalled her position as she heard the opening verses of the chapter. Then she remembered, and sat down.

As soon as the congregation was dismissed, the lady who sat in the pew spoke to her.

"What is your name little girl," she said.

"Hattie Kent, madam," replied the child with ready courtesy. "I am blind," she added, after a moment.

"Yes, I see. You are not alone?"

"Oh! no madam. My brother is one of the singers."

"How long have you been blind?" asked the lady, gently.

"I have been losing my sight for a long

time, ma'am, but it is only within a month that I have been entirely blind."

Just then Paul and Arthur came up, the lady turning round spoke to the young clergyman who was passing through on his way out.

"Edgar, come here a moment."

Mr. Halliday came up to the group, shook hands with the two boys, and then holding his hand to Hallie, said in a grave, sweet tone

"And who is this?"

"This is the sister to one of these boys," said Mrs. Atherton, in reply. "I was wishing that the doctor could see her."

Mr. Halliday saw how it was in a moment. He began talking kindly and gently with the little blind girl, asking her questions in such a way that she felt perfectly at liberty to answer. And her replies were so free from affect, and yet given with such a sweet self-possession and quiet "poise of manner" that the lady and gentleman several times exchanged glances of approval.

"Are you boys coming to the class on Saturday?" Mr. Halliday asked, present-



coming to Paul and Arthur, who stood waiting.

They both replied that they were coming.

"Well, then, Paul, suppose you bring your mother with you if she likes to come. Mrs. Atherton's husband is a physician, and I should like to have him look at these eyes. Tell your mother that Mrs. Atherton will take the greatest care of her, and we will send her home in the carriage."

Paul thanked him, and promised, and after he had spoken again to Hattie, he led her away, only stopping a moment in the ante-room, and then coming to her again with Arthur.

"Hattie," he said, "this is Arthur of whom I told you."

Her hand was taken immediately, and a gentle voice said:

"I am glad to see you. Did you like the service?"

"Oh! so very much," replied Hattie, "Paul, I heard your voice, and knew it among all the rest."

"That is not so very strange, Hattie," said

Arthur, brightly, "for Paul has the fine voice."

"And oh! that organ! What does it look like? Arthur, Paul, tell me about it?"

So the two boys guided her gently homewards, telling her about the organ, with gilded pipes, and the beautiful music Christmas and Easter.

"You will come often now, will you not said Arthur, as he parted from them.

"I would like it, and when Paul will bring me I will come. Good-night!" And the brother and sister walked on together.

"You may go with me every night, when you are strong enough," said Paul, as they drew near home.

"Paul, I am so glad, and it has made me so happy," was the grateful reply.

Was Paul repaid? I think so; and his mother's heart was full as she saw him leading his sister homewards, and noticed his care for her afterwards when they sat around the supper-table, and she was so eager to talk of the service, the music, and the "lady with the sweet voice."

Paul joined the conversation too, this evening, talking brightly of his walk, and Hallie's pleasure. When they were gathered for the evening, he helped his mother lay away the goods in the store, and close it for the night. Then Lottie timidly asked him to read aloud, and he did so for an hour, and as he closed the book she thanked him, telling him how well he read.

"Now Paul," said Hallie, "Please, cue thing more. Read the second lesson of the service this evening."

So Paul read without glancing up, caring only to remember the face he had seen listening to it that evening in the church.

"Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you."

There was silence for a few moments after he ceased to read, and then as Lottie rose to lead Hallie away, the little afflicted one said with a little sigh of pleasure, "This has been a happy, happy day."

Then Paul thought of her—his little blind

sister—and of the pleasure she had known in listening to the evening prayers, and how good and merciful it was that she could thus find enjoyment in the midst of trouble. And then the words with the opening verse of the Psalter at evening service passed through his mind, he sang them aloud as he shut and bolted doors and windows. Hallie heard it and was asleep listening to the holy words:

“Truly God is loving unto Israel; even unto them that are of a clean heart.”

## CHAPTER II.

SATURDAY afternoon saw two thirds of the boys assembled at Mr. Halliday's house, at the hour he had arranged for them to come. Paul had waited for Hallie to be ready, until was past the hour, so that when they came together, at last, it was some minutes after five, and they walked as rapidly as Hallie's infirmity would allow of her doing.

Mrs. Atherton met them at the door, and escorting Paul up the stair-case to the study where the boys were assembled, she led Hallie to her own little sitting-room, from which she had come to welcome them. Hallie was a little timid to-day, for although she had said nothing with regard to it, yet she knew that the doctor intended to examine her eyes, and she feared pain. She found, however, as she entered the room with a trembling step,





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at the roll that he arrived at the place he was seeking.

On coming to the back of her chair, he asked her to let him roll it to the window. She could see no better. She took the "iron" of it, and when he had put it in the position he desired, and had turned over the seat to it, and, as it was touching, taken and held by the arms, she heard the voice say:

"You must not feel afraid. The eyes are not so bad, and does not to touch them."

"No, sir, I do," returned the man, "I see, to be sure, but I am not afraid to touch them."

"No, sir, not at all."

"You must not feel afraid, the eyes are not so bad, and does not to touch them?"

"No, sir, I do," returned the man, "I see, to be sure, but I am not afraid to touch them."

"I am so glad to see you,"  
 said he, eagerly.

"I am glad to see you,"  
 said he, eagerly.  
 "I am glad to see you,"  
 said he, eagerly.

"I am glad to see you,"  
 said he, eagerly.  
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which it ended; he thanked God that  
we saw that it had ended even in  
and trouble,

all my life."

[illegible]

The University of California, Berkeley, has been a leader in the development of the field of environmental health. The University of California, Berkeley, has been a leader in the development of the field of environmental health. The University of California, Berkeley, has been a leader in the development of the field of environmental health.

parents following—the boys watched with a strange feeling.

As far as social rank goes, the little brought forward to-night, was far above the boys who were so much interested in baptism. It had been brought to the church in a heavy shining carriage with a pair of arms upon the door. Its tiny white embroidered robe almost swept the stone floor; the nurse presently carried it forward to the font; and the lady who followed rustling silks, was instantly recognized as belonging to one of the wealthy families who reside in the city. The boys just noticed her, and then to discover this, and then as Mr. H. commenced speaking, they all rose and gave their most hushed attention.

Such a little creature! Such a tiny blossom to be received into the great fold of Christ! Paul looked at the babe with an almost awe-struck face. It lay with its eyes wide open, gazing up into the face of the lady who held it, and moving its tiny hands restlessly to and fro. The lady, mother, standing near, divided her attention between the



and Mr. Halliday ; the one moment watching its face for fear it would become restless or cry, and the next listening to the clergyman's words, and *taking in* the responsibility which rested upon her for the little child.

• “Dearly beloved, ye have brought this child here to be baptized ; ye have prayed that our Lord Jesus Christ would vouchsafe to receive her, to release her from sin, to sanctify her with the Holy Ghost, to give her the kingdom of heaven and everlasting life. Ye have heard also that our Lord Jesus Christ hath promised in his Gospel, to grant all these things that ye have prayed for ; which promise he, for his part, will most surely keep and perform.

“Wherefore, after this promise made by Christ, this infant must also faithfully, for her part, promise by you that are her sureties (until she come of age to take it upon herself) that she will renounce the devil and all his works, and constantly believe God's holy Word, and obediently keep his commandments.”

Paul drew his breath for a moment, painfully. Were these the deeds that were required

of him? Was he to obey all these holy commandments in order that it might be "k of him" that he had "been with Jesus?"

How solemn the charge! How true the promises!

He listened spell-bound to the questions and answers which followed. Had they all been spoken for him once? The last came to him with an overpowering force.

"Wilt thou then obediently keep the holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of thy life?"

"I will, by God's help."

In the prayer—the cry for help that followed, Paul's voice was not the only that trembled, and if the chorus chant of "Amen" lacked its usual strength, it was from any absence of feeling on the part of the supplicants, but a touched remembrance of the connection with the service.

Presently the tiny creature was transferred from the arms of the nurse to the mother, attendance to Mr. Halliday. The pure sparkling cup of water from the stone font fell upon its white forehead. "Into the congregation

of Christ's flock." O blessed company! This pure one came into the fold of God, signed and sealed for his service. "Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto her life's end."

It lay back in its mother's arms after that, with the water still in little braided drops upon its brow; and presently a stray beam from the setting sun struck through the colored glass of the great window, and fell upon the child's pure forehead, and upon the water drops. For an instant it was crowned, and the crystals sparkled in the yellow light like jewels. Arthur saw it from his seat, and grasped Paul's hand suddenly, with a low uttered exclamation of awe and delight. The mother saw it, and touched with the sight stood perfectly still, that the picture should remain. Mr. Halliday saw it, and the parting charge to the parents was given with an added solemnity and marked gravity, as if he were musing whether the glory fore-shadowed another crown—beyond.

The mother, Mrs. Lawrence, seemed loath to break the spell, and when she did turn, it was with a lingering step that she brought

her little daughter out of the sunlight into shadow. She passed down the aisle between the singers' seats, and as Arthur noticed her jewels flashed upon her hands and the richness of her dress, he thought about the promise just given for the renouncement of "world, the flesh, and the devil," and a prayer arose, that God would keep watch over this new member of his house.

The remainder of the service was held. A perfume seemed to hang about it from the baptism, that lingered and gathered about the prayers and hymns, and over the service which followed—it being Sunday night—was preaching—for it dwelt upon God's love and our debt of gratitude for that sacrifice made for us. To the boys of the Sunday class, it was but Mr. Halliday's tale, which they had repeated and beautified, made more and if it could be more loving, by the sacrament just administered.

Paul could not see the speaker, for as he gave out his text with a scarcely hidden emotion, in face and voice and manner, "We shall separate us from the love of Christ."

Paul's eyes were dim, and with his elbow resting upon his book, and his hand shading his face, he listened to the sermon with a shaken spirit.

Arthur and Hallie stood upon the steps after service waiting for Paul, before they began their homeward walk, and keeping sober silence until he should come, and they could talk over the scene they had witnessed together. They waited some time, however, and when Paul at length ran up, it was only to tell Hallie that she must let Arthur take her home and to ask Arthur if he would be kind enough to undertake the charge. "The organist wanted him a few minutes to sing over an Anthem" he said, humbly. So they went off very happily together, Arthur secretly very proud of his charge, and Hallie glad to have a quiet walk with her brother's friend; and Paul went back quickly through the choir, and up into the organ loft, where the organist sat at his instrument sounding sweet clear chords, and waiting for his pupil to enter.

"It seems rather early for us to begin upon

the Christmas Anthems in October," he said with a smile toward Paul, and turning a pile of music as he spoke, "but let me make my selections for Christmas, we would like to try your voice on two or three, and I will arrange my choice accordingly."

So Paul lingered near the heated organ, and sang for half an hour, singing steadily and there as they were designated an organist, who seemed pleased with the music, and detained him as long as he could. At last, however, he ceased playing, turned round,

"Are you tired?" he asked, smiling.

"A little," replied Paul, "and besides, it is nearly dark."

"So it is," he returned, starting up, "but it is quite amiss in me to keep you so long, but you sing so well and patiently, that it is really a pleasure to play for you."

"Thank you, sir," said Paul, with a blush of pleasure at the compliment—*who dislikes to be praised for their music?*—"Your selections are very beautiful. Is one of them from Haydn?"



"Yes," he replied. "What do you know about Haydn?"

"Why, we sing a hymn sometimes taken from one of the Oratorios. I have almost forgotten, but I think it bears his name."

The organist turned about again, and played, smiling; "Is that the one," he asked?

"Yes, that is it," replied Paul; "It is one of my favorites."

The player rose then, and turning off the lamps went down into the body of the church. Paul followed, but he lingered in the ante-room until he had seen the organist pass away into the moonlight, and then he went back into the church. How still it was there! The last lingering notes from the now closed and silent organ had floated off and been lost on the darkening air, and the gathering gloom was fast settling down among the vast columns. Paul stepped timidly forward over the stone floor, which echoed every footfall, until he stood by the font where the service had been performed this evening. He saw by the dim light which came in through the great win-

dow, that the water had not been ren-  
but he only gave one glance and then  
beside the font.

The service passed in review before  
mind; this that he had seen, and the  
which he knew had been spoken for a  
long ago. Every promise he repeated  
tally, pausing before he gave the reply  
even these were all given at length, an-  
corded in his heart never to be forgo-  
wiltfully neglected or blotted out—never  
to be hidden away, but to make a part of  
daily life, so long as he should be spared  
do his duty in that state of life in which  
should please God to call him."

Then he rose, and standing a moment  
the font, he touched his finger to the water  
and marking upon his forehead the cross  
had been placed there for him years ago.  
that he was indeed a "member of Christ  
"and a child of God!" With uplifted eyes  
and clasped hands, silently he stood and prayed  
for help and strength.

And so Paul renewed the promises of a  
baptism.

## CHAPTER THIRD.

IT could not have been more than a week after this, that one sunny bright afternoon—one of those “calm mild days” of which Bryant tells us, which seem to draw us right back into the delight and glow and glory of the spring—on the afternoon of such a day as this, it was, that Hallie’s mother drew the great arm chair to the window, and placed her there in the cool fresh air, and left her swinging backwards and forwards, and thinking of Paul, and presently of Arthur.

Paul had changed. They all noticed it, but there was not one of them who liked to breathe it aloud, because of the fear which we all of us have sometimes, that a thing uttered loses its charm, a spell is broken which scatters the brightness.

His mother and Lottie felt the change in

the way the house was cared for, was water brought, the store kept clear, bright fires awaiting them in the afternoon. There were but few grumbling work-always ready hands and feet. Lott's monotonous sewing was enlivened now by a read, or a hymn sung, by the father's voice they were so learning to love. It could not quite become used to it, but a daily joy for which they were thankful.

Little Arthur saw the alteration in his friend. There was no lack now of devoted attention to the services of the church and he was never noisy or disorderly in the ante-room as some of the choir boys were. Then too, when the two talked over service, as they often did on their way home Paul would ask timid questions of Arthur whom he seemed instinctively to recognize far above and beyond him in goodness and love to God. Arthur with his own common direct judgment, saw that Paul was struggling and pressing towards a holy life, and for that he knew it was very little help that he could give, a chance passage of Scripture.

the verse of a hymn as they parted at the corner of the street, would leave Paul with sufficient to keep his thoughts busy until he should see his little friend again.

But of all others, perhaps, Hallie felt the change more than any one. Since her blindness her life had been very lonely, and her mother and sister, much as they desired to amuse and entertain her, many times felt their own duties so heavy that there was little time for her, and she was often forced to sit alone, with no other occupation than her knitting and her thoughts. Of late, however, there had been a great change. Paul had bestowed all his leisure time upon his little afflicted sister. He had that tact which very few possess, of interesting and amusing her in so many different ways that her interest never flagged, for as he saw that she tired of one amusement, he was quick to introduce another.

Then he sang to her a great deal, and there was nothing that pleased her more than for him to come in just after he had brought her home from Church, and drawing his

stood along by her chair, sing her the most beautiful hymns and anthems of the church. Had often more than one listener, passing along the street outside would listen to the full **rich voice**; and neighbors, knowing at what hour the best would be sung, would sit their doors open that the melody might float in then. At first at least Paul an effort to get up his own comfort and love of ease for those about him, but he soon began to love it, and to give Hallie pleasure was of his highest enjoyments.

The little girl was thinking of all this as she sat in her chair by the window, feeling very glad and grateful.

Her musings were interrupted presently the door opened and some one came near persons—Hattie knew there were two from the sound of the steps.

"Lottie?" she said, in a little startled way.

"No, it is not Lottie, it is I," replied mother, "and I have brought Dr. Atherton in to see you."

Hallie was on her feet in a moment, with her hand held towards the doctor.

It was taken immediately, and the pleasant voice she had heard on the day of the meeting, asked her gently, how she was, and then the doctor sat down beside her and commenced talking to her mother.

"I find," he said, pleasantly, "that something can be done for these eyes of Hallie's; and I thought I would come and obtain your permission to work upon them."

Hallie listened intently for her mother's answer. Mrs. Kent hesitated some time before she replied.

"I do not wish you to think," she said, at length, "that I would not trust you with her, for I feel sure you would do it in your power to restore her sight, but to be frank, I am very poor, and such an operation as I feel sure Hallie's case would require, would take more money than I can spare—then I *hesitate*, indeed. You cannot think how it pains me to refuse your offer, for Hallie's sake, but I have been thinking it over since Hallie told



me you were going to call, and I find I give it up, for the present, at least."

"I do not wish you for a moment to think that I would wish you to incur heavy expense," replied the doctor, earnestly. "I thought I might ask you, for Hallie's sake, to make an arrangement, say, like this. I know I drive a horse and carriage, and can my rounds among my patients. I should like to remain with the carriage when I am in the house, to take the horse to the stable at night, and to remain in the house when I am absent on foot. Your son Paul is a boy who sings at the church—is such a boy as I should need, and I will take charge of Hallie without causing any expense, if I could secure his services for a year. Of course that would not interfere with his duties in the choir."

"You are very kind, doctor," replied Mr. Kent, much moved. "For my own part, I will most fully consent to this arrangement only Paul thinks with us."

"What do you say, Miss Hallie? A

you still too much afraid of me to venture?" said the doctor, playfully, taking her hand.

Halle's face was as bright as her answer. "I am not afraid, sir, for I know you will do just what is right. If only Paul will go!"

"Will what?" said her brother's voice at the back of her chair.

They both turned quickly, and the doctor welcomed him, and proceeded to acquaint him with the arrangement they were trying to effect. "And now it only remains for you to consent," he said, as he concluded his narrative.

Paul stood, passing his hands backwards and forwards over Halle's golden hair, listening with downcast eyes. The sick girl was using every effort of self-control to keep herself from trembling. His mother never stirred, only watched him with intent eyes.

"I cannot tell you how great I feel your kindness to be, doctor," he said, after a moment. "I would feel it more a privilege than a duty to serve you as you ask; and if, by so doing, I can in any way benefit this dear sister, I shall feel forever grateful."

Hallie's self-control was all gone in a instant. She bent her head upon the back of her chair and sobbed for very joy. Kent's lip was quivering, and even he was not unmoved, but stood absorbed some minutes in the contemplation of the joy made as he stood there bending a grave, sweet look upon his blind sister.

He broke the spell, however, by discussing the funeral arrangements with Paul. He was to come the next Monday morning, ready to accompany the doctor on his morning round of visits. He was to have his dinner with them, and return in time for the evening service.

But Paul's one thought of joy was above all the rest was, that now he was near Mr. Halliday every day.

The doctor had not quite finished then, for he turned round again to Mrs. Kent as Paul left the room.

"There is a distinguished physician just now," said the doctor, "with whom I would like to consult about Hallie, and I thought, if you would allow me, I would

her up to Mrs. Lawrence's mansion—where he is stopping—some day next week. He could judge better if he should sooner."

"I am perfectly willing," replied Mrs. Kent.

"Wasn't it Mrs. Lawrence's little girl who was baptized Sunday before last?" asked Hallie, suddenly.

"Certainly," returned the doctor. "Were you there?"

"Yes," replied the little girl, with a tender remembrance of the time.

The doctor rose then and took leave, making arrangements with Mrs. Kent on his way out, that Hallie should be ready for him on the following Wednesday morning.

Hallie had not been alone more than five minutes after his departure when Paul returned, and coming up to her chamber, said:

"Hallie, Arthur is obliged to remain at home from service to-night on account of his having taken cold, and he sent word by his sister, who was here just before I came in, to ask if you and I would stop a few moments

and see him on our way to church, do you like to do so?"

"Indeed I should," replied Hallie, looking up. "What time is it, Paul?"

"Time to go, Hallie. Stay where you are, and I will get your cloak and hat."

So they were brought for her, and put on as neatly and nicely as her mother could do, and then they set off together.

They found Arthur laid on a comfortable quiet little sitting-room, waiting, and expecting his visitors. No room could have been sweeter than the one in which he raised himself upon his elbow, welcomed his little friends, introducing them to his mother who had brought them. Hallie had gathered some late flowers for him from her mother's garden, and she showed them to him now, telling him that, but that she could not see them, Paul said they were pretty. She well knew that Paul's word was authority with little Arthur, as it was hers.

He was very much pleased. His smile and lingering look after them, as

mother bore them away to place them in water, told Paul so, and his words, spoken with a mingling of his own pleasure and her kindness, told Hallie even more.

They fell into very happy talk then, starting out with the doctor and his arrangement with Paul, and winding up with Mr. Halliday and the Saturday class. Presently Arthur's mother brought some cakes and apples for the children, and Arthur who laughingly declared he was not allowed to touch such things, looked on with the utmost delight to see them enjoyed by Hallie and Paul.

"Hallie," he said, by and by when they rose to go, "does Paul ever sing for you?"

"Oh! yes," replied the child, "almost every evening."

"Then he must sing to me," said Arthur, triumphantly, and with a smile and a word with Paul, he laid himself back among the pillows to listen. Hallie sat upon a stool by the side of Arthur's couch, and resting her head upon her hand, wore a face of the utmost content.

The singer could not have had more attentive listeners, or those who more fully appreciated the music. He sang one of those he was learning, at first, full of true notes and words gladdened in the joy of a born Saviour. He paused a moment when he had finished, and heard Arthur's praise and thanks, and then he began again, softly and tenderly this time:

"God shall charge his angels legions,

When I war in the desert lone;

Thou shalt walk through hostile regions,

Though in desert wilds thou sleepest."

Do you know this, reader, and the wonderful Psalm from which it is taken? If not, get and take your Bible and read it, and see what a world of trust and devotion, of love and great courage, is contained in those verses.

Paul's hearers knew the Psalm, and loved it, so the music had double sweetness for them. Arthur raised himself again, as Paul finished, and rose—with more words of thanks and pleasure.

"What a good time you must have ever had to-night," he said to Hattie, as he held her



hand at parting. "You must come again, if I am not able to be out, and give me some more pleasure. Good-bye."

"My dear Paul, good-night. Do not look like that about my illness, but, when Mr. Halliday reads that prayer of thanks to-night, just pray for me, for I am very, very happy and thankful."

"How does he look, Paul?" asked Hallie, as they quickened their steps towards the church.

"Very weak and pale," replied Paul, gravely.

"Do you think he is very ill, Paul, dear?"

"I can scarcely tell, Hallie. He is never very strong. I sometimes think he will not live long; for he keeps so near heaven in his thoughts always, and is so frail and tender. His face has a far-away look about it which makes me think he will not be here long."

"Paul," said Hallie, after a moment, speaking very softly, but oh! so sorrowfully and wistfully: "I wish I could see Arthur's face."

He was touched in a moment. "My dear

little sister, I wish you could," he said, with a gentle look of affection towards her, "it would have done her good to have seen you."

Hallie had not been in her seat in church long before the Dr. and Mrs. Atherton came in. With the unerring eye of the blind she knew it to be they, and moved a little for Mrs. Atherton to pass, and then sat quietly as before.

The service seemed to Hallie this evening more sweet than usual. She was willing to lose a word, as she knelt it so as it she could spend her life there at the foot-stool of the Lord. It seemed, too, everything combined to help on her thoughts. The evening chapter was one of the glorious letters of St. Paul's, where he knew nothing but Christ. It was a sort of lesson to Hallie, that in her new joy and thankfulness she must never forget Him whom it came, and that to Him she must live, and for Him she must live. She wished Mr. Halliday read, that the whole chapter might be stamped upon her memory.

there was so much on which her heart could rest.

"But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." The words fell with very different interpretation upon the ears of those that heard them. Mr. Halliday, who read, seemed almost carried heavenward on the wings of St. Paul's utter love and trust, there was such a sound of pure joy in his voice. Young Kent admired the strength of life and purpose in a Christian Martyr devoted to his Master's service—for Divine words come home with force to simple hearts—and he listened with awe. Dr. Atherton could make very little of it, it was something beyond and above him, but while trying to fix his attention, his eyes fell upon Hallie, who sat near him. That the lesson was very different from her stand-point, he saw instantly, and as quickly acknowledged to himself how

much higher her view of it was of her own. Her face was touching no expression. Her sightless eyes were beneath bent eyelids, and the play of the about the mouth showed various feelings. She was thinking how powerful some thoughts had been as strength and comfort from the time when he wrote them out, and with the closing of the chapter it was as if the words might be true of her.

"For our conversation is in heaven in whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ."

And her face looked as though she was almost there already.

Did Arthur's friend forget his request? I do not think he could have done so, when Mr. Halliday's voice rose in the thanksgiving. Paul followed every word.

"And we beseech Thee, give us that sense of all Thy mercies, that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful, and that we may show forth Thy praise, not only with our lips but in our lives, by giving up ourselves

Thy service, and by walking before Thee in holiness and righteousness all our days.'

The boy felt that he had far greater cause to be thankful than his friend, for what an abundance of blessings he had which Arthur had not; so the thanks were given for himself with all earnestness.

Hannie with her heart full of hope, and a feeling of love for her Saviour which the chapter had inspired, thought of Arthur, and with her whole soul prayed that she too might give up her life to God's service. 'Lo! how a little coven, heaveneth thou wilt be huzap!

And is it strange that to the two children thus led step by step nearer to God, the church in which they worshipped should grow to them like the "gate of Heaven!"

Both Arthur and Paul feared that the former would not be well enough on Saturday afternoon to attend the class. Neither said anything about it, and as Arthur seemed brighter, and was sitting up when Paul called a few minutes before service on Friday afternoon, he went away with the hope that he would be able to go after all; but when

he stepped into the little bright sitting-room on Saturday morning, and saw Arthur back among his pillows very pale and weak. He knew that his sick friend could not

Arthur felt the disappointment more than he was willing to say, or show in any way, so he smiled gently at Paul, telling him it was no use, and asking him to remember what Halliday said, that he might tell him some words. Paul saw how tired he was, and only stayed a few minutes, just long enough to deliver the flowers Hallie had sent him.

Arthur's absence was the only thing that could hurt the afternoon's exercises to-day, and even as it was, he could not help watching them. All the boys were there, and Mr. Halliday asked them to sing one of the evening chants.

The voices blending together in the school-room, without an instrument to accompany them, had a very curious effect. Paul thought it was the sweetest music he had ever heard in all his life.

Mr. Halliday gave them a little talk on

prayer, and Paul treasured every word both for his own and that of his friend. The pastor brought God in his character of loving-kindness very near to the hearts listening to him, and they all felt that their souls must almost be open to his view, so nearly did he touch the thoughts and feelings of each one.

He came to Paul directly after they were dismissed, asking after Arthur, who, he said he had missed for several days from the church.

"Arthur is very feeble naturally," Paul explained in reply, "and now he is quite ill at home with a cold. He wished very much to come this morning when I was there, but he was not strong enough."

Mr. Halliday expressed himself very sorry, and then turned to another boy who accosted him.

Paul waited a moment to see if he was wanted longer, and then went quietly away.

It was a cold windy day, and Hattie was not going to Church, so Paul went directly from Mr. Halliday's to the church. It was now a dark afternoon and the lamps

were lighted in the choir. It is a great building a very peculiar one. The nave lay in shadow, except as when the wind set the lights a quiver, then little flashes of brightness were in among the columns, lighting the instant, and then leaving them in shadow before.

Paul was just leaving the service, when he heard his name spoken and to find Mr. Halliday close to him.

"Are you going home, Paul?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," replied Paul.

"I wonder then you would be so good as to show me where Aunt Anne's grave is. I should so like a few minutes on my way home."

Paul was very willing, for he was pleased Arthur would be so kind to show him the place, very much interested by Mr. Halliday's persistent chat with him.

When they reached the house, Paul found a messenger waiting for him. He hurried him to another room, where, sitting secretly, he was pressed and heard by the young



man's visit, led the way to the sitting-room where Arthur lay upon his couch. The little boy had heard the voices, and, stronger since his friend's visit in the morning, raised himself, expecting to welcome only Paul.

When he saw Mr. Halliday, he sat upright upon his couch, and reaching out his hand with his face beaming all over with the pleasure he felt, he said, very earnestly :

"Oh! sir, how good of you to come! How very glad I am to see you."

Paul did not wait to hear more, but telling Arthur's mother he could not stay, he ran away down the street brushing away the tears which *would* come into his eyes when he thought of the greeting he had heard.

## CHAPTER IV.

IT was with a great deal of secret, unexpressed pleasure that Paul prepared the following Monday morning to report himself to the Doctor at his office.

The early service just over, had left a peaceful, happy feeling in his heart, and it seemed as if the work in which he was about to engage, could not prove anything but pleasant. The Doctor was waiting for him when he arrived, and they set off immediately. The calls were very numerous and the visits often long, but Paul would sit back in the carriage, holding the reins, and watch the people who passed, never wearying or wishing for the Doctor's coming.

There was always a pleasant word or two for him when the Doctor did come out, and they drove on ; just enough to leave Paul something pleasant to think about when they should com-

to the next stopping-place. When they returned to the office it was near noon, and the Doctor went immediately to his dinner, leaving Paul to answer any calls which might come at the door. He had a great book of engravings to entertain himself with, and a bright glowing fire for company; and these in the cheery, cosy little room lined with book-cases and other bits of comfort, would have made one happy who was far less inclined to be so than was Paul. When the Doctor brought his genial face back into the office he sent Paul away for his dinner, and the boy was welcomed in the dining-room by Mrs. Atherton in her own peculiarly winning manner, which carried so much relief and ease to his mind, that he sat down without the least perceptible embarrassment.

Afterwards, when the Doctor had gone away on foot, and left Paul at the house to remain until service-time, the boy found himself a deep-seated chair, and drawing it up to the open grate spent another hour in the most agreeable manner over his beautiful pictures.

At the end of this time the door opened,

and Mr. Halliday with a book in his hand, stepped in. He seemed surprised for a moment upon seeing Paul, and then coming forward he reached out his hand.

"How do you do," he said, cordially. "I had forgotten that you were to be installed in your office to-day. My little study lies on the north side of the house, and it is rather cheerless sometimes, so I come with my book when the doctor is out, and plant myself at those delightful windows. Sit quite still, I shall not disturb you, and you will not disturb me."

Mr. Halliday threw himself upon a lounge under one of the windows, and was soon deep in his book, while Paul, with just a little movement of his own chair, brought himself into such a position that as he lifted his eyes from the pictures they should fall upon the figure on the lounge. He divided his attention between the book and his pastor until the doctor came in.

"I am just in good season, Paul," he said, coming up to the fire, and rubbing his hands together to warm them. "It is nearly time

you were off, for the old man who rings the bells at the church was just going in as I came by."

Paul started up and closed his book, and the young minister sprang to his feet.

"Why, I had no idea it was so late," he exclaimed. "Paul and I were so intent upon our books, that we gave no heed to time. Come my boys, all we go down together?"

So Paul found his hat, and after reporting to the Doctor the persons who had been there in his absence, the two went away together.

Such a walk as it was! So full of pleasant talk on one side, and loving attention on the other. The remembrance of it lasted Paul all through the service. It was only the first of many such walks that the two had together, for the young clergyman always stopped at the doctor's door at service-time for Paul, after this, and they went to the church together; and so a pleasant intercourse sprang up between them which was almost equally agreeable to both. It did not take long for Mr. Halliday to discover Paul's anxiety to serve his Lord and Master as his son and servant, and the pastor respected and loved

him for this and the noble qualities which he from time to time discovered in Paul. A gentle word of hope, encouragement, or comfort, often sent him on his way rejoicing, and kept his heart steadied for days; and he grew to have almost a reverence, besides a very deep and strong love for his friend and pastor.

But I am tiring you what it took days and weeks to bring about, and we must return to Hallie, and her visit to Mrs. Lawrence.

On the day the doctor had appointed, he sent Paul with the carriage to bring his sister to the office where he intended joining her. Mrs. Kent had taken no little trouble in dressing Hallie to-day, and it was a pretty little figure that came up to the carriage step to be lifted in by Paul. She wore a blue dress of some soft material, with tiny little white ruffles around the neck, and at the wrists. The beautiful golden curls were in perfect order, just caught away from her face with a blue ribbon, which was held together at one side by an old-fashioned silver arrow, some relic of her mother's bridal days; and it gave a finishing touch to the dainty quaintness of

her bearing, which nothing else could have done with so pleasing an effect.

Very timid and gentle she was to-day, but enjoying to the full her ride with Paul; for secretly she feared that when her brother's place should be filled by the doctor, her pleasure would be over for the day.

But for once she was mistaken. When Paul brought the horse to a stand before the door, the doctor came directly out. The boy, with a word or two of good-bye and encouragement had sprung out and was standing ready for the doctor to take the reins. This he did immediately, and seating himself and busily drawing on his gloves asked, "how she was."

She replied, very quietly, that she was "very well." But the two red spots on either cheeks showed that there was want of quietness somewhere. The doctor smiled and started the horse.

"Good-bye, Paul," said he.

"Oh! is Paul there?" said Hallie. "Good-bye, Paul."

"Good-bye, Hallie," returned her brother, "I hope you will have a pleasant ride."

"There is no doubt upon that subject," said the doctor.

It was a beautifully cool, clear day, and the drive was a very pretty one through the large town, busy, bustling with multitudes of carriages and carts, among which the doctor found his way. By the church with its massive towers, and the yard where lay those who were gone, some marked with cross-covered brown stone which had seen the storms of many winters, and others whose startling whiteness told of recent deaths. Presently they left the town and began traveling along the high-road between the hedges growing brown now but still pretty and picturesque. The hills rose blue in the distance and nearer were wooded parks and gentlemen's houses, with the gabled roofs and turrets rising above the foliage by which they were surrounded. The sweet, strong autumn breeze had full play here, and rushed through the country, up and down the hills, in among the trees, brilliant with Fall coloring. It whistled round the pointed roofs and corners of these beautiful country-seats, until those



within thought they heard voices in sadness or distress calling to them, so wierd and wild were the wind's voices.

Hallie had the best of it after all; for although she could not see the glory of the woods and fields, or the soft "smoky light" which hung over all, yet the freshness and strength which came with the wind, sent the blood tingling through her veins, driving off the fear with which she had started out, and bringing the roses into her cheeks in a way the doctor liked to watch. He made her see every thing to-day through his own eyes, and the accotants he amused her with of the people they passed on the road, the houses, the vines, the fields, and the hedges, made Hallie almost think she saw them. She began to feel that she was having a very nice time.

On the other hand, the doctor discovered something. The answers given to occasional questions were given with a self-possession and modest dignity which surprised the doctor exceedingly. The daintiness of her dress had not been lost upon him, either. He had thought to give her some gentle hints as to

her deportment towards the well bred people among whom she was going, but he came to the conclusion that he had better let her alone. If she maintained the same carriage towards Mrs. Lawrence which she showed here, he knew it would be approved.

"What is the matter, doctor?" asked Hallie, as the carriage suddenly came to a stand-still.

"Nothing in the world," replied the doctor, "only here is the gate of Glenwood Park, and I am waiting for the porter to come from the lodge and let us in."

"Now we are inside," he continued, as the horse moved forward, and the gate changed to behind them, "and it is a beautiful ride through the trees up to the mansion we are going to visit."

When they drew up again, it was before the door of the house, and the doctor springing out, lifted Hallie down very gently.

"Now we will go in," he said, brightly, wishing for an instant that she could see all the elegance lying in wait for them. He guided her up the steps and into the spacious hall with its high door. The servant met

them here, and ushering them into the great drawing room, left them, with the doctor's card in his hand.

The room into which they had come was very elegant. Hallie had felt a slight degree of wonder as her feet sank into the velvet carpet, but it did not appear; and when the doctor had placed her in one corner of the sofa, and himself in the other, he began to describe the room to her, watching her expressive face and finding there a full reward for his trouble.

"Mrs. Lawrence and Dr. Van Ratter are in the library," announced the servant, returning. "They bid me ask you to be kind enough to walk up."

"Come Hallie," said the doctor, and taking her by the hand again, he led her up the stair-case, following the serving man, who went on before, and threw open the door of the library.

Mrs. Lawrence rose and advanced towards them with a stateliness which gave her welcome the air of condescension.

"Dr. Albertson, I believe," she said, giving

him the tips of her fingers; "I am pleased to see you, sir."

"Thank you, madam," returned the doctor, "you do me great honor. This is my little patient and friend, whom I have brought for Dr. Van Raffer to see. Hallie, this is Mrs. Lawrence."

"Ah! yes, this is the one. How do you do, my child?"

"I thank you, I am very well," replied the gentle voice, with a quiet dignity and self-possession that left Mrs. Lawrence in the back-ground.

The doctor was amused. He knew if she had seen the haughty eye which were bent upon her, her composure would have departed in a moment, and he was glad for the instant that she was blind.

He left her now in a seat by the fire, and going over to Dr. Van Raffer, shook hands with him, and began to talk to him, and to Mrs. Lawrence who had returned to her seat and her light work. By and by the two physicians touched on the subject of Hallie's infirmity, and Dr. Atherton gave a full

account of it. Mrs. Lawrence listened a few minutes until growing interested she turned towards Hallie and said :

“ Little girl, come here a moment ! ”

The doctor did not hear, and Hallie rose from her chair, but feared to move.

“ Doctor,” said the lady, turning toward him as he stood talking, and speaking a little impatiently, “ I have called the child to me and she does not come.”

The doctor turned instantly, gave a glance at Hallie’s pained face, and then at Mrs. Lawrence, bowed slightly, and said, in a manner which betrayed but a shade of his feeling :

“ Mrs. Lawrence, Hallie is blind, and cannot find her way to you, as she is unacquainted with the room,” and without more words, he went over to Hallie, took her hand and led her to Mrs. Lawrence.

The lady was mortified, so she drew a stool near her, and having asked Hallie to sit down, talked with her a few minutes, asking various questions about her blindness, and receiving quiet but very full answers.

They had been sitting thus fifteen minutes when the door opened, and the nurse appeared with the little babe upon her arm, which she brought forward to Mrs. Lawrence, who instantly laid aside her work and took it upon her lap. The two doctors immediately came forward to look at the little creature, fresh and lovely in its tiny white dress, and to praise its beauty and healthy appearance. Dr. Atherton still stood near the child, when he suddenly felt his hand clasped, and found Hallie at his side, but the question she then put was not for him.

"Mrs. Lawrence," said the timid voice, "was your little girl baptized a few Sundays ago at the church?"

"Yes, my child. Why do you ask?"

"Oh! because," said Hallie, leaving the doctor, and kneeling down in front of Mrs. Lawrence, and taking the baby's tiny hand in hers, "I was there, and heard how the little girl was made a member of Christ's flock. Dear little baby! Brother Paul told me how the sunlight from the window made a crown upon its head, but I could not see that,

I could only know the solemn vows you made for her and hear you promise that she should 'walk in the same all the days of her life.' "

It was a picture! The lady with a very earnest look gazed upon her baby's face, while the hand upon which the jewels that Arthur had noticed danced and leaped in the sunlight, rested near Hallie's, which lay upon the child's dress. Her face was turned toward little Mabel, with an expression as though she longed to break through the cloud which shut out sight, and view the tiny soldier. The two who stood by watched the scene with curious interest. Mrs. Lawrence's eyes filled with tears.

"This is the same little Mabel," she said, softly. "Touch her face and see how very, very small she is."

Which Hallie, very much pleased, did, and then the two doctors moved away, and took Hallie with them to the window, where they asked her questions, and examined the darkened eyes. Dr. Van Rafler was very kind and gentle, and Dr. Atherton took the nicest possible care of her, so that she felt

no fear, and when Dr. Van Ratter had finished talking with her, he told her she was a very brave little girl.

Mrs. Lawrence rung then, and had lunch sent in for them, and with her own hands selected a beautiful bunch of grapes for Hallie, and saw that she had all she wanted. She had softened towards the little girl, and took leave of her with less of the lady and more of the mother in her manner.

"Remember," she said, as she tied Hallie's hat-strings, "you are to come here every Wednesday morning with the doctor to see Dr. Van Ratter. I shall expect you."

Then she received the doctor's adieu, and he took Hallie's hand, and led her down the great staircase again, and out to where his horse was fastened by a great stone at the side of the door.

"Come my lady," he said, reaching out his hand to her. "What do you call me that for?" she asked, laughing, as she sprang into the carriage.

"Oh! because you and Mrs. Lawrence are on such good terms, I suppose," he returned.



"Doctor, what did she look like, and what pretty things were there in the library?"

And thereupon followed a long conversation with regard to the visit they had made, which only ended with their drawing up at the doctor's gate.

"You must come in with me," said the doctor. "I have made arrangements that you should spend the day with us, and return with Paul this evening."

"Have you had a pleasant ride?" said Mrs. Atherton, meeting and kissing her at the gate.

"I think, ma'am," said Hallie, "that I never had so nice a ride in all my life."

Paul was at her side a moment after, and they all went in together. If it could have been, the afternoon was more delightful than the morning. The doctor well pleased with his day's work gave up the afternoon to her—at least as much of it as he could spare, and Mrs. Atherton claimed her attention when he was busy.

The doctor thought it best that his wife should explain to Hallie what Dr. Van Ratler had said with regard to her eyes, so once

when he was out of the room, she called Hallie to her, and taking her hand, said:

"My dear, I want to tell you what Dr. Van Ratter thinks of these eyes."

She was attentive in a moment.

"He thinks, Hallie, that you can see again by going through a very painful operation, and that in order to prepare for this, you must take medicine every day for some months, and come to him every Wednesday at Glenwood. Then, by and by, some time in March, perhaps, he thinks you can have the operation performed. Are you willing to go through with this?"

"Will I be well, afterwards?"

"It is not certain, but we hope so, if God so wills it."

"I am willing to bear anything if I can see the light once more. All this day I have been wishing that I had my sight," she went on in a voice which trembled, "Is it wrong, Mrs. Atherton?"

"No, Hallie," said the lady, with her voice full of feeling. "No, my dear."

"Every body is very, very kind, Mrs.

Atherton, but I am all in the dark." The sobs came then, and Mrs. Atherton had her hands full to quiet her.

It was not often that Hallie showed to any one what she felt about her blindness, but occasionally, as to-day, when there was so much to make her long for sight, the pent up feelings found vent, and the tears came.

She was bright and merry again soon, and Mrs. Atherton had forgotten all about her burst of grief, when something occurred which brought it back very forcibly to her mind.

They were just going, and Mr. Halliday was waiting near until Hallie should have bidden them all good-night, when, as she gave her hand to Mrs. Atherton, she said very gravely and humbly :

"I am very sorry ma'am, that I cried this afternoon, because I was blind. It was very wrong, because God is only too good to me, and I should be thankful every day. I only hope that you will forgive me, for I will pray to God to pardon me, as I kneel at prayers to-night."

Mrs. Atherton bent down quickly and kissed her. "You did not mean wrong, Hallie, I know," she said, with emotion, "and I forgive you heartily."

Then they went away, and the doctor and Mrs. Atherton watched them far down the street.

"She would make a good lady," said the doctor, as he related to his wife, the scene of the morning.

"She will do more than that," Mrs. Atherton replied, "she will be a comfort to her mother."

But the child, unmindful, unconscious of praise, knelt in the church, and joined with a contrite heart as the congregation said with one accord—

"We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; and we have done those things which we ought not to have done"

## CHAPTER V.

**I**T was the beginning of November, before Arthur was able to be out again, and then as he took his seat beside Paul in the choir, his friend thought he looked very pale and thin.

He gave Paul such a bright smile of greeting, however, and looked so happy at the thought of being back in his old seat again, that Paul laid his fears aside, and as he opened the chant book, which they shared together, he gave a little sigh of relief and felt very glad to have Arthur's voice beside him again.

But as the weeks passed on, it was with a mixture of pleasure and pain that Paul listened to the daily service. Arthur was often there, almost always in fact—but many times it was a very weak, tired little voice which joined in the responses, and the cough which had com-

mened at the time of his illness, increased steadily. He spoke to Paul sometimes, gravely and sweetly with regard to his increasing weakness, telling him with a smile that he must continue to attend the church service as long as he could for the sake of those at home who needed his earnings. Paul felt sure that he tried to conceal as far as he could from his mother his feebleness, and he sometimes thought it very strange that she could not perceive how white and thin the little free was, and how slow his step. It grieved his friend exceedingly, and whenever it lay in his power he would save Arthur extra steps, by sometimes obtaining the Doctor's permission to drive him to service, when he was more weak than usual.

One morning, towards the middle of the month, Arthur seemed more feeble than ever, as he came in languidly and seated himself beside Paul. Then, as his friend placed his arm about him, he leaned back with a little sigh of the most extreme pain and weariness, that went to Paul's heart to hear. If anything could make Paul love the service more than

he did, it was to see the effect the beautiful words often had upon his little friend.

This morning, being the ninth of the month, the second lesson was the 17th chapter of St. John, and as the sublime words were read by the voice which felt the wondrous love which breathed through every one of them, and so dwelt upon their power as though he could not linger long enough, Arthur listened until he forgot his aching head, and was lost to everything but the peace which came with the spoken words of our Saviour. He gave Paul a quick glance and smile as it ended and he rose to sing the chant which followed.

I do not think in all Paul's after life he ever forgot the way the responses were given in these days, and a sweet sense of love, and trust, and dependance, would cling about the words of the Litany ever after, which he always traced to the confiding way in which they were used by Arthur during these days of his illness. They sang "God shall charge his angel legions," this morning, and it left Arthur in such a happy state that he came into the ante-room, leaning on Paul's arm, and smile-

ing and talking very cheerfully. Dr. Atherton was standing on the step when they came out, and he asked Arthur, as he met him, if he would not like to have Paul drive him home.

The little boy gave him a pleased smile, and said: "Yes, sir, I should, indeed. You are very kind, I am not strong this morning."

The doctor looked at him a moment very compassionately, and then turned away with a face of the utmost gravity, as he watched Paul almost lift him into the carriage.

Mr. Halliday came up just as Paul was ready to drive away, and walking round to the other side of the carriage, gave his hand to Arthur, asking him "how he was this morning?"

"Not very well," returned Arthur, with his usual smile. "Do you not think it would be better to remain at home these damp mornings Arthur?" asked his Pastor.

"Perhaps it would, sir, but I must come for a while yet."

"I could come over any evening and read the service to you, if you would like," suggested Mr. Halliday, again.



"You are very, very kind sir," replied Arthur, with the tears starting, "but, you know, mother needs my earnings as long as I can give them to her."

Then, as Mr. Halliday turned away, the choir-master came up for a word and a smile with the little boy, so that when Paul, at last, drove away, he was laughing with Arthur about the attention he received. And truly he had a great deal of notice taken of him in one way or another. The boys had all learned to know him, and would take his hat and coat when he came in, and bring him his surplice, in a tender way, which showed how good and noble the boy hearts were. The Doctor and Mr. Halliday, from Paul's frequent mention of him, were feeling much interest in him, and each one in his own way—as we have seen—contributed to his comfort.

"But dear Arthur," said Paul, as the carriage moved forward, "you should not come these chilly days, it only makes your cough worse."

"I know it, Paul," replied Arthur, earnestly, "but I must come until after Christmas. I

could not miss the services then, and you know it may be my last chance of ever hearing them."

How Paul would have liked to deny that eagerly on the spot, but he knew he could not with truth, and he only replied, not daring to meet the gentle eyes :

"You may be better in the spring, Arthur!"

"Yes," replied the child, steadily and gravely, "I may be well then, for I may be with Jesus."

There was nothing more for Paul then but to let the tears come, and for a few moments they fell fast.

"Do not cry Paul," said Arthur, softly, "It is not grief, but joy, you know."

"Joy for you," replied his friend bitterly, "but oh! what grief for me!"

And Paul carried a very sober face all that day. The vision of his little feeble friend was with him all through the house, and he felt that something should be done to awaken his mother to a knowledge of his feebleness.

He stood by the Doctor's desk just at night waiting for his dismissal, with the cloud of



PAUL & ARTHUR.



gravity still on his face, and very silent and still. Mr. Halliday stood by the fire pulling on his gloves.

The Doctor had noticed Paul's unusual manner, and surmising that he was grieving for his friend, he said, with a glance at him, as he handed him a note to be delivered on his way to the church:

"Your little friend is very feeble to-day."

"Yes, sir," replied Paul, sorrowfully.

"You will not have him with you long," continued the Doctor. "I fear he must soon die."

Paul turned away suddenly, and came close to the fire, looking down into the coals, and striving to master his emotion.

"I think," said Mr. Halliday, with a glance at Paul's pained face, "that little Arthur Weirs can say with St. Paul, 'With me to live is Christ, to die is gain.'"

"Is your little friend a Christian, Paul?" asked the Doctor.

"Arthur lives very close to God," replied Paul, speaking with some difficulty.

"It is no cause for grief, my boy," said

Mr. Halliday, when they had been walking for some minutes through the thick, misty air, and one or two sighs had told Mr. Halliday whether his thoughts had gone.

"I know, sir, Arthur says so, but oh! what a loss for us who remain! I only hope he will not venture out this evening," he added, anxiously.

He had a few comforting words in return from Mr. Halliday, and then as they came near the corner of the street, Paul espied Arthur coming along feebly through the mist. He uttered an exclamation, and sprang towards him.

"Oh! Artie," he said, "what could have brought you out on such a night!"

"I must, Paul."

"No, no, you must not!" replied Paul, distressed beyond measure. "Then directly back with me, and spend the time with Hester. Here is our house close at hand."

"No, Paul, the choir-master will expect me," urged Arthur, feebly.

"I think you had better do as Paul wishes," said Mr. Halliday's voice beside him. "I will explain your absence."

"Well, sir, if you will be so good, I will go back, for I am very tired. Paul let me lean on your arm."

So the two went away into the darkness, the one so full of life and health, so strong to support; the other so full of pain, weariness, and weakness, and oh! so near to Heaven.

Paul took him into the house and left him with Halie, who was overjoyed to have him with her. He was made comfortable immediately in her own chair, with pillows piled all about him, his wet shoes taken off, and some soft slippers of Paul's placed upon his feet; and after Halie had let him rest a few minutes, she found her Bible and Lottie read to them the evening lessons.

"For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

"Grace unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

The words were worth the hearing.

Paul found two very contented faces beside the open fire when he returned. The one

gave him a very sweet, happy smile of welcome, and the other said, joyfully :

"It is Paul ! I know his step."

He came forward with a moved face, and kneeling down beside the arm chair, said :

"How do you feel now, Arthur, dear?"

Arthur reached out his hand and passed it admiringly over Paul's thick black curls, saying with a little smile as he did so :

"Very happy. It is time for me to go home now, is it not?"

"Why no, Artie," replied Paul, laughingly, "I have been over to see your mother, and she says you may stay all night with me. I told her you were not well enough to come out in the damp night air, again."

"What a dear, good boy," returned Arthur, much pleased. "Halle do you hear that? I am to stay all night."

And it proved to be a very bright evening. Arthur reclined and watched the bright fire, glancing between-whiles towards his two friends who were chatting with him. Paul sang for them, too, a gentle, soft children's hymn which he had learned somewhere, and



which was so suited to the mood of the two loving hearts beside him. He exerted himself to his utmost to please them, lest Arthur should perceive that he felt unhappy, and so should be led to inquire into the particulars of his interview with his mother.

He had found Mrs. Wiers busy with her household duties, and as he came in she had asked him where Arthur was. He replied by telling her that he did not feel very strong, and he had come to ask her permission for him to remain all night where he was.

She readily gave her consent, and then something—probably Paul's grave face—led her to ask, "You do not think Arthur very ill, do you?"

"He has been growing weaker ever since he took cold," replied Paul, perceiving what his sad duty was, and so ready to perform it as such.

"You do not think him in any danger, do you?" asked the now anxious mother, and dropping the dish she held, she came over to the window where Paul stood, looking up anxiously into his face.

"Yes, ma'am," replied Paul. "He has a severe cough. He should not be out in the dampness."

"Oh! he shall not, again," said his mother, "but the cough he has now is only the remains of his cold. He is always delicate. The doctor has not said anything to you about it, has he?"

Paul did not know how to reply, so he stood silent with an aching heart.

"Tell me, Paul, I am his mother," demanded the now startled woman.

"Yes, ma'am, the doctor speaks of him."

"And what does he say?—Paul, tell me!"

"He says, oh! Mrs. Wiers, I would spare you if I could, but, he says—that Arthur cannot stay with us long."

"My only, dear boy!" cried the mother, wringing her hands and weeping. "I cannot spare him yet!" Her grief was the more intense as she was so unprepared for the blow. It wrung Paul's heart to see her anguish. He could not comfort, for he stood in need of consolation himself, and he would have left her, but he had yet a word more to say, and

he waited until the stricken mother was calm enough to listen.

"Mrs. Wiers," said he, at length, "I need not tell you that Arthur surmises this, and that it does not lessen his happiness. You will try, I feel sure, not to allow him to perceive how sorely we all grieve, as it would make him sad, and might hasten the end."

"Paul," she returned, with her hand upon his shoulder, "You are his good friend. I will try."

This was the load that Paul brought into the little parlor when he came back, and it was only with the greatest effort that he kept back the tears. But his trials for the day were not yet over. Arthur was to room with him to-night, and Mrs. Kent had made a full, bright fire in the open grate, that the little sick boy might have the benefit of the heat, for it was a very chilly, damp night.

Arthur uttered an exclamation of delight as he came in and saw the light from the fire making dancing shadows all over the room, and touching every point where it could get a chance to linger, and resting there.

"Paul," he exclaimed, joyfully, "your candle is not needed, it will only spoil the fire-light. Leave it somewhere out of the way!"

So Paul left the candle just outside the door and came up to his friend who was looking down with pleased eyes into the blaze. There was nothing Arthur enjoyed so much as sitting by a bright, old wing fire with his eyes fixed upon the coals, and now he turned these eyes to Paul's face with a very happy smile.

"Do you know, Paul," he said, "I like playing hide-and-seek with those shadows over there. Look, ain't they having a nice game?"

Paul gave a little laughing glance in the direction Arthur's finger indicated, and stooping down placed a little tin-cup which he had brought up with him, near to the fire.

"What's that?" asked Arthur.

"That," replied Paul with a smile, "is a very nice mixture of my mother's, which will make your throat feel much more comfortable, perhaps, at all events, it will loosen your cough."

Arthur was down before the fire in an instant, and taking a little of the liquid in the spoon, tasted it curiously.

"Paul, it's good," he said, "did you taste?"

"No," laughed Paul, "but I've tasted before. Do you want to go to bed now?"

"Not yet, Paulie. Come and sit down, and talk to me in the fire-light."

So the boys sat down for a chat about every imaginable thing that is interesting in boy life, for these two had other thoughts besides those upon which I have more particularly dwelt, and they loved as well as other boys, all those things which go to make up with them the incidents of daily life. So they talked on, until finally a quiet fell between them, and each one mused silently.

"Paul," said Arthur, at length, suddenly, "what does Dr. Atherton say about my weakness?"

Paul rose instantly, and hurriedly crossed the room on a pretended errand. "My dear boy, what do you want to know for?" he asked.

"Why, I do, of course. Tell me, there's a dear, good boy," he urged, as Paul returned to his side: "What does he say?"

"Artie, do not ask me," he said, troubled, and uncertain how to answer, and kneeling down by his friend's chair.

"Paul, you will tell me, I know," replied the gentle boy. "Does the doctor think that next year I shall be,

'In that beautiful land He has gone to prepare  
For all who are washed and forgiven?'"

It was said with a quietness and fearlessness of the answer, which almost overcame his friend.

"He does not say *that*, Artie, but he thinks—oh! Artie, how can I tell you!—he thinks you will not be with us very long," and Paul leaned his head up against the arm of the chair, too much moved to say more.

There was a dead silence for a few moments in the room, and then Arthur, resting his hand upon the bowed head, said in a sweet, clear voice:

"Paul, it is all joy."

The boy did not, because he could not,

reply, and the silence lasted long, until Arthur's voice again broke it by humming over a tune, softly and lightly.

Paul bore it as long as he could, and then he raised his head :

"Artie," he said, "what are you thinking of?"

"Of two things," replied Arthur, stretching out his hands before the blaze, "one of them was the words which belong to that tune I was singing.

'Forever with the Lord,  
Amen, so let it be  
Life from the dead is in that word ;  
'Tis immortality.  
Here in the body pent,  
Absent from Thee I roam,  
But lazily ; then lay to my tent,  
A day's march nearer home.'"

The tired voice carried the tune through faintly and sweetly. Paul was weeping bitterly.

"Of what else were you thinking, Artie," he asked in a broken voice.

"Of this," replied the boy, and kneeling beside his friend his feeble voice rose again

in the words of one of the most beautiful of the Collects of the church.

“Grant O Lord, that as we are baptized into the death of thy blessed Son our Saviour Jesus Christ, so by continual mortifying our corrupt affections, we may be buried with Him, and that through the grave and gate of death we may pass to our joyful resurrection, for his merits, who died, and was buried, and rose again for us, Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”



## CHAPTER VI.

CHRISTMAS drew near. The days grew shorter and colder, and the little white snow-flakes fell, whitening the ground. The trees were all bare of leaves, and Hallie plucked the last flowers from the garden. Only in the woods, underneath the leaves, were the green creepers, and the mistletoe clung to bare branches, and among the great, tall skeletons of the trees, there were holly bushes here and there, with bright red berries, peeping out from underneath the stiff green foliage. One could not see them in their homes in the wood, and breathe in the earthy smell which pervaded the air, as the leaves were tossed aside, without thinking of the coming festivities and Christmas cheer, of which these tiny scarlet sprays were the token. Every one began to look forward to household gatherings, the ex-

change of gifts, and all the enjoyment which gathers and clusters about that one week.

It is but right and fitting that this should be so. The world would lose a great part of the goodness that clings about it, if this yearly feast were taken away. And then it always brings the Great Love with which the festival commenced, so forcibly to our minds.

There can be no one, be he ever so careless or heedless, to whom, in his own delight, the memory of the Child Jesus does not come. If there are a few who entirely overlook our greatest Gift, even to them the "peace on earth, goodwill to men" is a living reality in these days. A wide-spread charity, seems to sweep through the world and drop from its wings, love and peace, joy and a universal brotherhood of feeling, which for a time makes "our earth an Eden."

It was this season, which I tell you, drew nearer and nearer. To our little friends Hallie and Arthur and Paul, the days grew more and more bright. They began to feel the first intimation of its approach upon Advent Sunday. To all of us who love the

Church, this day comes as a special feast. We almost see the Holy Child, and we really hear the echo of his footsteps along the golden floor of the weeks which intervene between this and the glorious announcement of his birth to the Shepherds.

Much to Arthur's joy, he was quite strong on Advent Sunday, and came to the church prepared to enjoy the day, and he did take the utmost comfort and satisfaction from the service. He seemed to Paul, just as he was in the days when he had first known him. He seemed to enjoy the singing more than he had done for some time before, and when they were told that they must come prepared to learn the new Anthems, Arthur looked round at Paul with a glad, bright face, feeling that if his strength continued, he should be able to be with them.

It was a bright day for Hallie, also. The doctor who had taken excellent care of her health lately, promised that shortly after Christmas the operation they had been awaiting should be performed, and her improved health caused her to forget the morbid ideas

with which she had at first greeted the proposal, and to look forward to it as a time of great blessing, for she felt that her sight would be given her again. Doctor Van Raffer was still a guest at Mrs. Lawrence's, and so Hallie made frequent visits to Glenwood. And she was never so happy as when she was bundled about with robes, reclining in the Doctor's carriage, with that little black horse trotting forward before her. She grew to enjoy her visits very much. Ever since that first day, Mrs. Lawrence had been exceedingly kind, and always brought the baby in before she went away. Halae was quite a study to the lady. Within the circle in which she existed, she had never come in contact with any one, either child or one of maturer years, who made the service of God so much a part of her daily life. This may have been more striking, because the tiny creature whose face Hallie could not see, but which she touched wistfully, was inseparably connected with the baptism, and its constant presence would lead her to speak continually of the church and the service, and naturally,

also, of the Saviour and the joy of following his loving example. Then, too, her never failing patience and evenness of disposition, under her affliction, made her life an illustration of her words.

It was the Wednesday following the first Sunday in Advent, and Hallie had been left, at the special request of Mrs. Lawrence, to spend the day with her. She had amused herself a long time with the baby, but at length it had fallen asleep, and she was standing near Mrs. Lawrence, and listening to a bird which was warbling very sweetly in a cage near her. The lady looked towards her from time to time, and at length discovered that Hallie's thoughts had wandered away, and that the bird's song was evidently forgotten, for her face was very grave.

"What are you musing about, Hallie?" she asked.

"I was thinking of Arthur," returned Hallie, gently.

"And who is Arthur?" kindly inquired Mrs. Lawrence. "You have only one brother, I think, you said."

‘Only one,’ replied Hallie, “but Arthur is Paul’s friend. I will tell you of what I was thinking.”

So she proceeded to give to Mrs. Lawrence a full account of her brother’s friend. It was told very naturally and with great simplicity of manner, and choice of words, yet with such a full sympathy with Arthur, and such a quick perception of the purity and loveliness of his life, that her narration lacked neither interest nor pathos. Mrs. Lawrence grew interested, and questioned Hallie until she knew every thing there was to tell, of the choir, the boys, and the Saturday class. She sat very thoughtfully for some time after, not heeding Hallie, who was winding silk for her, and only rousing occasionally to ask a question. By and by, however, she started up.

“Why, Hallie, child, have you been winding silk all this time? I had forgotten all about you. Let the rest be. I am going to order the carriage now, and you and I will anticipate the Doctor by riding down there, and meeting him just when he is about to start. Would you like that? I have a sad-

den desire to see Mr. Halliday, and I suppose it must be before service. You have no need to see Dr. Van Ratler again to-day, have you?"

"No," Hallie had not, and she was overjoyed with the prospect of a ride with Mrs. Lawrence. Her delight was not lessened when the coachman put her into the splendid carriage, and she sank back among the cushions. When the horses started, she found it very different from the Doctor's chaise, for the motion was hardly perceptible, so smoothly did they glide along. There was very little said by either of them, but Mrs. Lawrence could see by her face, how very much Hallie enjoyed the ride.

When they reached the Doctor's, Mrs. Lawrence made Hallie go on with her, "her"—she told her—"I am going to prayers to-night, and I shall want you with me." The Doctor and Mr. Halliday were both in the office, and welcomed the two as they came in.

"I drove down with Hallie," explained Mrs. Lawrence in answer to the surprised inquiries of the Doctor, "because I wished to

see Mr. Halliday a few moments before service."

The Doctor laughed, said "he supposed then that he was not wanted," and went away immediately before the lady had time to recall him.

Mr. Halliday sat still, unconsciously comparing his two visitors, and secretly very curious to know what Mrs. Lawrence might want with him.

She pulled off her gloves, and taking Hallie's hand which was resting on her lap, turned toward Mr. Halliday. "Hallie has been telling me, sir," she said, "of your choir, and the kindly interest which you have been taking in the lads of late, and I have been wondering whether the members of the Saturday class would not like a little feast at Christmas."

"I have no doubt of it," replied Mr. Halliday. "I have thought of such a thing myself, but I found that it was beyond my power. It would be very expensive."

"I know that, sir, and it is for that reason that I came to make my offer. I thought to



invite the members of the Saturday class to a little supper at my house directly after prayers on Christmas Eve. I will manage the whole affair, and will take charge of their conveyance to my house. I would like to make the season as bright for them as I could. Partially through my little friend Hallie, but more particularly through the claim my little daughter has here, I have become of late very much interested in the church, and if I could please them in some such way as this, it would give me great pleasure."

Mr. Halliday looked very much pleased, and Mrs. Lawrence\* felt the sensitive hand which lay to it is tremble.

"I can answer for my boys," said Mr. Halliday in reply, "that it would be a source of unbounded gratification to them, and for myself who have been so anxious for some such project for them. I can only say that any aid which I can offer to forward your work will be most cheerfully given."

"Do you think the time I have set, a proper one?"

"None more so. It can't not have been

on Christmas day, for there are three services at the church."

"Thank you, I will see you about it soon, again," said Mrs. Lawrence, rising. "Come Hallie," she added, "we must go now, or we shall detain Mr. Halliday."

"And now, my dear," she continued, as the coachman closed the door, "you must not say a word of all this to Paul or Arthur, or any one. I shall rely upon you to help me a great deal."

Hallie was overjoyed. She had more questions to ask than Mrs. Lawrence knew how to answer, and it was a cheery face she carried into the church.

There was not one of those gathered in the church, who did not notice the two as they came in together. The lady was dressed all in velvet to-day, and her furs were ermine. She was very stately and grand. Her face lost the mild, pleasant expression it had wore towards Hallie, and as she perceived the curious glances directed towards them, the haughty, distant look she commonly wore in public, returned. Hallie knew none of this.

*She* was very plainly dressed in a neat, brown suit, with a tiny blue hood. Fresh and dainty as she looked, there was a marvellous difference between her trim little figure and that of the magnificent woman at her side. But the sweet, placid face underneath the hood was all unconscious of observation, and she walked in with the quiet dignity which became her so well. So pure, so childlike and lovely the face was, with the drooping eye-lids, and the look which told that she remembered where she was, and the love for the church, that Mrs. Lawrence looked down upon her with absolute envy; and then turned her attention to the service. She heard how the responses were given by Hallie, she watched the two, of whose devotion she had heard from Hallie, and she listened to the voice and words of the young minister whose tender solicitude for the little ones of his flock she knew.

And she learned her lesson from them all. So unconsciously, and yet so constantly, are we all preachers, influencing either for evil or for good, all those with whom we come in

contact. God grant that we may so walk that people may see of us that we have "been with Jesus" and know that we "walk with God."

The Collect came with special force to-night.

"Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which Thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when He shall come again in His glorious Majesty, to judge both the quick and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal, through him who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, now and ever. Amen."

The mother prayed—for the first time—that she might lead her little child for whom she had renounced the world, to such consecration of herself to Him who loves us, that the services of the church might be dear to her, as they were to the little figure at her side.

She would not let her go after service, but drove her home in her carriage—and the two

boys, her brother and his friend, walked soberly homewards through the twilight.

"Do you know, Arthur," said Paul, "I thought to-night when Hallie came in with that grand lady, that my little sister was far the sweeter looking of the two, for all Mrs. Lawrence was dressed so splendidly. But, perhaps, it is because I love her."

"No," returned Arthur, "I don't think that's it. Her face is the sweetest thing I know. It always reminds me of a picture I once saw of a pure little child floating off through the air, while above its head was suspended a starry crown. I have often, as I looked at Hallie, caught myself wondering that I did not see the crown which I felt sure was hovering over her head."

Paul, with one of the quick, anxious looks that sometimes came over his face, looked down into the pale, earnest countenance upturned to his. "You are better, Arthur, are you not?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Arthur, shaking his hand as they parted. "I am better. I shall see the Christmas."

But not beyond ! oh ! he could not see beyond !

So the days went on. Mrs. Lawrence very busy with her various and extended preparations for her festival, and Hallie listening to her accounts, wondering and admiring in one breath, and at home keeping herself as still as a little mouse, with not one word breathed with regard to it. She, as well as Arthur never looked beyond the Christmas. Everything seemed to hang upon that. Arthur felt it so, as well as Hallie. He seemed much stronger, but it was his own determination that kept him up more than anything else. He felt that the Christmas gatherings must not be lost, and so he was always in his place. Paul took so much comfort ! His duties during the day were only a pleasure, then he never tired of the service ; the Anthems they were learning were wonderfully beautiful, and to have Arthur with so much of his old cheerfulness singing by his side, was in itself great happiness.

Arthur's mother, anxious now that her boy's health should be restored, by all the

means in their power, felt that he was better, and watched him move about with a ray of hope in her heart, and a doubt whether or not the doctor *knew*, when he said he could not stay.

But Arthur never forgot, not for one moment. He knew better than they could tell him, his danger, and with a word now and then, would keep them reminded that his time among them might be short. Truly, as Paul had said, he lived very close to heaven, and the far away look in his eyes deepened. Christmas Eve came on Friday. It was perhaps a week before, at the Saturday class, that Mr. Halliday, with the utmost gratification, read the invitation written from Mrs. Lawrence to the boys, to assemble at Mr. Halliday's house after the beautiful service of Christmas Eve, and thence to be carried in carriages to Glenwood, to a little supper given for them there.

The boys were quite wild with delight. They gathered in knots as they came out, eager to see if any one of them knew anything about it. Paul told Hallie as soon as

he met her, and then she replied by informing him that she had known it weeks before. She was glad, however, that the invitations were issued, for now she could talk about it, and speak the words that had been burning on her tongue for a length of time, which seemed to her much longer than it really was.

The following Wednesday when she went up to Glenwood, Mrs. Lawrence told her of all her arrangements, and then invited her to come, also, with Dr. and Mrs. Atherton. "I have arranged with them to bring you," she said, "if you like to come."

Hallie was overjoyed, and as this was all Paul lacked to make him a very happy boy, he was in a state of supreme contentment.

Arthur was not so well at the beginning of the week. He looked feeble and pale, and coughed more; but he did not speak of it, and came twice a day to the service. It was noticed by both his friends, and they only hoped he might not become immediately worse. The three looked forward but a short time now.

They were in no calm mood, when on



Christmas Eve they came through the fading daylight toward the church. They were to go—you remember—directly to Mr. Halliday's after the service, and from there to Glenwood. But the instant they stepped within the church wall, every heart was awed to quiet. Mr. Halliday had taken pains to have the building dressed in greens, and the fragrance reached them before they caught sight of the beautiful hangings, and when Hallie stepped into her seat, and knelt for prayer, she suddenly remembered the song of the Angels to the Shepherds, and that was her petition.

How beautifully the church looked in its green decorations, and oh! what sweet music the organ sent forth, Christ is born! Everything proclaimed it. The house was filled with people all seemingly most devout. The whole service was wonderful to-night. The new-born King was through it all. The boys sang their sweet Anthems with that one thought, and Mr. Halliday's voice had a ring of joy in it that nothing else could have put there.

Arthur seized every word as though he could not let them go. He looked about the beautiful place, up through the dim arches, and along the vaulted roof. He strove to fix the position of every tablet in his mind, and to remember every word Mr. Halliday uttered. He sang as he had never done before.

“Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”

Then they fell upon their knees, and the prayers that followed seemed to bring the Saviour into their very midst, with all the loving mercy that he brought with him when he came to Bethlehem so long ago.

They were loath to leave. Mr. Halliday pronounced the benediction besought the peace of God to rest upon them—with a voice full of feeling, and then there was a hush! and Arthur almost heard the angel sing.

Presently, however, they moved, and the sweet stillness was broken. The boys laid aside their surplices, and were soon away up

the street. Hallie went immediately out with Mr. and Mrs. Atherton. But before Paul started, a hand was on his arm, and a voice beside him said, "Once more, Paul. Take me back into the church." The tone was so feeble, that Paul started and looked down, asking Arthur if he was not well.

"Yes, he was very well," he said, sweetly smiling through pale lips, "but the church, please take me in once more, Paul, before the lamps are out."

So they went back into the empty building. The air seemed full of music, and the blessed influence which had so lately been present there. Arthur looked all about as though he could not leave it; at the Reading-desk, the Pulpit, the Singers' seats, and the Organ, and then back to the great window and the Cross.

"I am ready now," he said, faintly.

Paul led him out, and there was not a word spoken between them until they were far up the street. Then he put his hand within Paul's, and giving a little, short sob of pain said:

"Paul, dear, I shall never see it again."

## CHAPTER VII.

"<sup>As</sup> **W**H. ARTHUR, isn't this perfectly beautiful?"

"I never saw anything half so pretty in all my life," returned Arthur. "I should like to stay here always."

Tacy had been ushered into the great dining-hall at Glenwood, and now stood just within the door, gazing with wide-opened eyes of wonder and delight at the beautiful room which Mrs. Lawrence had so carefully prepared for their reception.

The long dining-hall was hung with the brightest and most beautiful pictures, gathered from the different rooms of the house, and the ceiling and the walls themselves, were heavily festooned with holly branches, laurel, and the finer evergreens in wreaths and long hangings. Along these, lamps were arranged at short

intervals and threw a very full but tempered light over the whole. At one end of the hall there was a large arch, composed of green and flowers, and in tiny letters of light, were the words :

WELCOME TO THE SATURDAY CLASS!

Down the length of the room on one side, was a long table filled with every variety of food, substantial and delicate, cold meat and bread, cake, oranges, grapes, nuts, candies, and a variety of other things, and the whole ornamented with the choicest flowers of the green-house.

Mrs. Lawrence had spared neither expense nor trouble, and now she was moving about among her guests, pleased with their pleasure, and feeling gratified and amused with the expressions of surprise and delight which she heard on every side.

She came up to our two friends presently, leading Hallie by the hand. "Here are Paul and Arthur," she said to her as they approached.

"Ah!" returned Hallie, "that is just what I wanted. Paul where are you? Have you just arrived? I have been wondering where you were."

"Yes, we are just come," returned Paul, giving her his hand. "Have they told you how beautiful it is, Hallie?"

"Yes," she replied, "I have been told."

Mrs. Lawrence was busy talking with Arthur, whom she had immediately blessed.

"You are not feeling very strong to-night, are you?" asked the lady, noticing his pale face.

"Not very. I am afraid the confusion is too much for me. But do not give yourself any trouble about it, I will find a seat by and by," was Arthur's gentle reply.

"Hallie will take you over to the sofa and give you a seat there," said Mrs. Lawrence.

"Hallie, my dear," she continued, turning to her, "Arthur is tired, suppose you take him over to the sofa opposite the great picture, and give him a seat there. You need not stir or move when supper is announced, I will see that you are duly served. I shall want Paul a little while."

Hallie and Arthur, much pleased, moved away, the little blind girl seeming perfectly familiar with the room, and only bidding Arthur, laughingly, to see that the people did not run against her. But there was little danger of that, for every one there knew Hallie, and many had a word and a smile for her as she passed them.

Arthur was bestowed safely at length among the cushions, and the two sat in pleasant chat, Arthur describing every thing and every body about them, and Hallie listening and laughing.

"Hallie," he said, at length, "there is a most wonderful picture hangs among the greens just opposite us. Have you heard about it?"

"Yes," said Hallie, "and they tell me there is an inscription in among the gilding of the frame at the top of the picture. Do you see it?"

Arthur looked and read in golden letters:

"We praise Thee O God."

The representation was that of three choir boys, in their surplices, standing before a

desk upon which lay an open Prayer Book. They were each one drinking in the spirit of the words they sang, but with widely different faces. The centre figure wore a calm, peaceful countenance, full of perfect and entire trust in the God whose praise he sung. On either side of him, stood his younger friends, the one, with bent eyes fixed upon the book, and sober, half-sorrowful lines about the mouth, and the other one, gazing with trustful loving eyes up into the face of his older friend.

Paul came up while Arthur still studied it, and his attention was directly drawn to it. Just then, too, Mr. Halliday and Mrs. Atherton came forward for the same purpose. They stood examining it for several minutes. Mrs. Atherton suddenly said, touching her brother, and speaking low:

“Edwin, look round. There is the very fac-simile.”

Mr. Halliday looked as she directed, and was struck with it in a moment. Paul stood looking toward the picture, with very grave, intent eyes, and Arthur by his side, was look-



ing up into his face in a most loving way, and talking to them about it. Hallie stood by her brother, with one hand resting on his shoulder, and her sightless eyes bent upon the floor, listening to the comments given by the other two.

Their very ignorance of the picture they presented, made it the more perfect. The painting was forgotten in the cocontemplation of the groupe. It was several minutes before they moved, and then Mrs. Atherton turned away, with her eyes full of tears.

"I never saw anything so striking," she said.

Hallie and Arthur did not rise when the children were called to supper, but sat quite still, waiting until some one should come to them. They did not lack attention, however. Mrs. Lawrence came first, with one of the servants, and brought them whatever she could think of that was nice. Then Paul came up, and stood with them awhile, then Mr. Halliday and Mrs. Atherton; and the latter kissed Hallie, gently, and gave her the bouquet of Heliotrope and sweet-smelling roses

which she carried. Presently the doctor came up, and held a laughing chat with them.

When the feast was over, the tables were removed and the boys played various Christmas games.

Mrs. Lawrence made them feel so perfectly at home, that they soon ceased to have the sense of timidity and awe which had at first oppressed them; and moved about, feeling perfectly easy and free to do as they liked. She and the other ladies and gentlemen whom she had invited, passed up and down among the children, assisting them in their games. Hellen being the only little girl present, she received a great deal of attention from every one. The boys, many of whom knew her from having seen her so often at church, came up timidly and spoke to her, or ran to hide themselves near her when pursued in their games.

By and by, when it began to grow late, Mr. Halliday assembled them all at one end of the long dining hall, and when they were all silent, thanked Mrs. Lawrence in their

names for the joyous feast she had given them.

"They feel that they can do very little," he said, "to repay Mrs. Lawrence, but they have prepared a Christmas Carol to show that they are not unmindful of her kindness, which they would be glad to sing, if Mrs. Lawrence will be pleased to allow them."

The hostess expressed herself very happy to listen, so the boys at a given signal burst forth in a full chorus with one of the most beautiful of Christmas Carols. The power of so many rich voices filled the room so full of music, that the air seemed heavy with it. They sang in their very best manner, feeling so happy with the pleasure of the evening. After they had finished, Mrs. Lawrence passed round to each one, bidding them good night, and leaving in their hands as she did so, a little gift which she took from a stand held by a servant who followed her.

She seemingly overlooked Hattie in the general distribution, but came back to her after the boys had passed out of the door, and

she stood by Mrs. Atherton, waiting until the doctor should be ready.

"I did not forget you, Hallie," she said, "but I sent your little present off late this afternoon, down to your house. It is a little babying chair, just like the one in which you always sit when you come to see me. It was too large, you know, for you to take, even in the doctor's carriage."

"And Hallie wants to go home, and sit down in it immediately, no doubt," said the doctor, coming up. "Mrs. Lawrence we must bid you good night, and I assure you we have enjoyed the evening as much as the children."

The boys, meanwhile, were riding home, still full of fun, and singing Christmas Carols at the top of their voices. All except two—Paul and Arthur. The little feeble boy had held up to the last minute, even when he felt that the forced strength of the last few weeks was falling, but as he dropped into his seat beside Paul, he leaned down upon his friend, and said, "Paul, I am so ill."

Paul had known it all the evening, so now

it was only with a grave face, that he wrapped his own plaid round the little shivering boy, and held him close beside him. No one could tell the pain it cost him—that long ride! Arthur seemed to have failed so suddenly and completely. He coughed all the way, and when for a moment there was a lull, the heavily drawn breaths told of most intense suffering. Neither spoke, until they were inside the city, and then Paul whispered encouragingly, “We are almost home now,” and then the next minute he bit his lips to keep back the tears when he remembered how near “home” his friend was in another sense.

Arthur could not move, when they stopped at his door, so Paul taking him in his arms—for he was very slight and small, carried him directly into the warm sitting-room, and laid him on his couch. There was blood on the handkerchief he had been holding to his mouth. They all noticed it, his mother who had sprung out to meet them, with a cry of pain. Paul who leaned over him in silent agony, and his father who held a spoon in his great rough hand, and gave him as he could

bear it tiny drops of wine; gave them to, with the utmost gentleness and tenderness.

Under their combined efforts he rallied after a while, and lay quite still, feeling very weak. Paul sat near him, and the sick boy clasped his hand, and held it close.

It was very still in the little room. The clock ticked out very loud in the silence. The sorrowing parents sat over the fire, listening to the heavy breathing and watching their only boy with very wistful eyes. Paul felt that he could not bear it long. To see this dear boy lie so near death and not to be able to stretch out a hand, and hold him back was very hard. To feel this the joy and benefit of his life slipping away was oh! so heart-breaking, and to think of the places that should see his face no more—the choir, his own little room at home—the Saturday class. And Hallie, the sorrow she would feel when she heard how ill he was, it was almost overpowering. How he should miss the little voice which had sung beside him so long. It had been the last time to-night when he lingered at the door of the church. Paul

could not doubt it now, he felt that it must be so; but it wrung his heart when he thought of it.

It was not still outside while this silence reigned in the sick room. It was Christmas-Eve still, although very near the morning now, and the streets were busy and noisy. The boys singing carols, continually passed the door, and Paul perceived that Arthur always listened? pleased with the music. By and by, the church bells rung out upon the air, twelve distinct strokes, and then to usher in the Christmas morning the chimes gently struck:

Hark! the herald angels sing,  
Glory, to the new born King,  
Peace on earth and good mercy mild,  
God and sinners reconciled.

The little sick boy turned his head towards Paul, and with a tiny smile just hovering about his lips, listened to the sweet tune.

"It is Christmas Paul," he said faintly.

"Yes, Artie, I know," replied his friend.

"Are not the chimes sweet?" How does the Christmas find you, Paul?

It was an effort to reply. "Very happy to welcome the coming of the Prince of Peace, Arthur, but very sorry that the morning finds you so ill."

"There is no sorrow with me, Paul, I need not tell you *that*. It is only pain and weariness of body, and I thought during one of those carols just after you brought me in, that the angels which sang to the Shepherds were coming to carry me away. But I must not talk much, and they are waiting you at home. Sing 'God shall charge his angel legions,' just once, before you go."

How could he sing! With this grief filling his heart full, and with that little hand lying in his, so full of love and trust. It was some minutes before he thought of attempting, and even then the tone was low and often faltering. But he saw that Arthur perceived that his voice was unsteady, so he brought every effort of self-control to bear, and the verses after the first, were given in his own clear, mellow voice.

He waited a moment after he ceased to sing, and then as Arthur did not stir, he looked around to find that he was quietly and sweetly



sleeping. He rose then, and leaving a kiss on the hand he held, he put it back gently upon the couch, and went quietly out of the room.

"He is sleeping now," he said to the mother who had left the room while he was singing, and whom he now found weeping just outside the door. "I think he feels easier, tell him, when he wakes, that I will be in again in the morning."

So he went out into the clear, star-lighted night, with his grief. It absorbed his thoughts all the way. He felt that he could not part with this his friend and comforter, this his guide to holiness. By and by in his walk by a round-about-way homeward, for he had dreaded to announce his news, so sure he felt that the end was near, he found himself under the shadows of the towers of the church. The hour was still. All the voices lately so jubilant had died away, and the stars held possession of the night. Paul looked towards the doors where Arthur and he were wont to come together, and when he felt that they might never enter there again in com-

pany his heart failed him, and he wept for a few moments most bitterly. But, presently, better thoughts came. He pictured the better home his little friend was so near. He thought of the Master who was waiting to welcome him, and of the little soul eager to meet his Saviour "on the other shore." Was it not joy as he had said? If he must go away from these friends, he could not leave them without a loving remembrance of his Christian example and sweet piety, dwelling with them continually; and he would "be ever with the Lord." Oh! it was best so. God ever "doeth all things well."

Paul lifted his head then, and pausing to drink in the beauty of the night, tried to picture the scene on the Judean plains so long ago. And then he thanked God that now the "Master and only Saviour," was with all his people always, and would never go away as he had done when he was with them in a body. It was the coming joy of all, and presently when out on the clear, cool air, rung aloud from the lips of the boys under the shadow of the great church, every one who

heard, and there were many whose waking thoughts it checked with its beauty and power, felt that a soul was stirred with the might and wondrous love of the gift of God's dear Son.

Christ the Lord is come !  
He, the Son of God,  
On our earth has trod.  
Christ the Lord has come !

Christ the Lord is come !  
He who is so high,  
Comes for us to die.  
Christ the Lord has come !

Christ the Lord is come !  
We will love and trust  
This our "God with us."  
Christ the Lord has come !

Christ the Lord is come !  
When angel hosts salute,  
Shall our tongues be mute  
Christ the Lord is come !

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## CHAPTER VIII.

**T**HE services of Christmas day were a mingling of joy and pain to Paul. He had hoped against hope that Arthur would be with him to-day, but to have his seat empty, and to know how much he was suffering at home, made even the Hallelujah Chorus have a sorrowful chord running all the way through it. Yet it was joy to feel that it was Christmas day, and that everywhere—except that one little spot about which his thoughts clung—gladness and mirth were the order of the day. The church had many worshippers this morning, some no doubt attracted by the beauty of the music, and others feeling that on this day of all others it was their bounden duty to give thanks. Every word of the service seemed to go straight to Paul's heart. He scarcely noticed the large congre-

gation, so intent was he upon the words selected with special reference to the day, and which were given by Mr. Halliday as though he felt the full value of the gift of God to men.

First that grand old Psalm :

“The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handiwork.”

“Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.”

Then afterwards the sweet, simple, never wearying, ever blessed story of the angels’ visit to the shepherds. Was there ever a person whose attention the reading of these words did not arrest and hold ?

“And there were in the same country Shepherds abiding in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks by night.”

Somewhat to me there is a wonderful halo of sweetness all about that one verse. How many pleasant associations linger and hover around the annual reading of it from the Chancel. There is always a bound of joy within us, that goes out to join the angels’ song. And then ! what an opening into the

history of Immanuel—God with us. It is a little door which is opened just enough to show us—knowing as we do what follows—with one dazzling flash of glory, the beauty, the perfectness, and the divinity of the life of Christ with men.

Paul sung after those words just as he knew Arthur would have done, had he been there ; and if the thought of his friend would continually present itself to his mind, it was the Arthur who had so joyfully prepared the glorious anthems they were singing, not the light, suffering figure he had lifted into the house last evening.

Arthur had no lack of attention during the weeks which followed Christmas day. Every one of the friends who had of late interested themselves in his behalf, exerted themselves to contribute something to his comfort. The doctor came over immediately and gave him soothing medicines, and he fell into the habit of spending a few minutes every day with the sick boy. Not that he could do him any permanent good—he was beyond that—but the medicines soothed his cough, and caused

less suffering ; and then to see Arthur's face brighten as the doctor opened the door of the little sitting-room was enough reward, to send him back again many times. He took great pains to please Arthur, first, because he was Paul's friend, and afterwards, because he learned to love the gentle boy himself. Those things which Arthur most cared for—the service of his Lord and Master, the church and its services, the doctor cared very little about ; but he, nevertheless, brought him an abundance of Christmas greens to hang about his room, and a very pretty Prayer Book with the lessons attached, so that on the days when he could sit propped up with pillows, he might spend his time as he loved best to do. Mrs. Atherton sent him daily, by the doctor, dainty little delicacies of her own manufacture, which never failed to tempt Arthur's appetite, and once or twice she came herself to see him.

She did something else which was still better. It became a regular custom for Hallie and Paul to spend the hour before service in Arthur's little room. The doctor kindly dis-

missed him for this very purpose, and Mrs. Atherton always put into his hands as he went out, a choice little bouquet of flowers which she said was for Hallie to give to Arthur.

These were days of great pleasure to the little blind girl. She was always sure of a bright welcome from Arthur, and her flowers gave such pleasure! She learned to distinguish them from each other, and by dint of asking Arthur the colors, managed to arrange them very prettily for him. This was always her task. Paul would seat himself near the sick boy's couch, and talk with, or sing to him, and Hallie on a low stool within reach of Arthur's eyes, would busy herself over her sweet blossoms. Mrs. Lawrence would often send most beautiful flowers already arranged, and it was the delight of Hallie's heart to know how Arthur enjoyed them. She always ceased work before Paul was ready to sing, and laying her head on the foot of Arthur's couch, would enjoy the music as much as he did.

Paul took great pains to select such hymns



as he knew would please his friend, and they soothed and calmed Arthur wonderfully. Words of love, and trust, and heaven, they always were, and the gentle soul so near to "that beautiful land," drank them in as a description of that which was familiar to his thoughts.

But, perhaps, of all those who came to minister to his comfort, there was no one whose visits Arthur loved as those of Mr. Halliday. The young minister always made it his practice, and his privilege as well, to visit Arthur every evening after prayers, and read or talk to him awhile. It was a great enjoyment to both; Arthur would rest among his pillows with one hand in Mr. Halliday's, and listen to his voice, or talk with him about the words he read, in a most happy, pleased way; and they grew to be the very best of friends. It was the crowning joy of the day to Arthur, to hear that firm, decided step coming through the entry, and to reply to that hearty, "how are you to night, my boy?"

One cold Saturday evening, towards the

close of January, Mr. Halliday had been sitting some time with Arthur, reading to him, but by-and-by he ceased, and with his eyes bent upon the fire, sat very busily thinking. Arthur seeing he was very intent, watched him without speaking, pleased so long as he kept his face in sight.

"Arthur," he said at length, turning toward the watching face, "I have been telling the boys this afternoon about the Bishop's visit."

"Is there to be a Confirmation?" asked Arthur.

"Yes," returned Mr. Halliday, "there are a number just now, who desire to ratify and confirm their vows, so the Bishop has kindly promised to be with us in March."

"Did you say you spoke to the boys about it, sir?" asked Arthur.

"Yes, my boy, I thought that there were one or two who were thinking of taking that serious step, and who are now old enough to be confirmed."

"Yes, I think Paul would like it," returned Arthur, gravely.

"Do you?" asked Mr. Halliday. "That is the very fact I wished to know. I thought so, too, but Paul has never said anything more about it, although I told him two or three days ago that the Bishop intended coming."

"Paul is very shy," replied Arthur. "Perhaps he will speak to me about it. I think he loves to serve and please God, and would be glad to make a public acknowledgment of his vows."

"Do you and he ever talk of holy things?" asked Mr. Halliday.

"Oh! very often sir; and you should hear the hymns Paul sings to me before he goes away at night. You would know all his heart was in the words."

There was no more said about it just then, and although Arthur did not forget it, he did not give it much thought, until he noticed the abstracted face Paul brought into his room the next evening. Hallie was with him, with her usual bouquet of flowers, and her bright, glad, little face which was better to Arthur than all the flowers put together. Paul tried to enter into the lively discussion

which ensued as to the best method of arranging the variously tinted blossoms, but it was plain to be seen that he took very little interest in them. He roused himself for a cheerful chat with Arthur, but when the boy asked him to sing, his face sobered instantly, and after a moment's silence he commenced hesitatingly :

“O happy day that stays my choice,  
On Thee my Saviour and my God !”

Arthur recognized it instantly as the Confirmation hymn, and surmised which way Paul's thoughts were tending.

“That is very sweet, Paul,” said Arthur, as he finished. “It is, indeed, a happy day.”

Paul did not at once reply, but sat quite still with his eyes on the floor. By-and-by, however, he roused and turned towards his friend again.

“Arthur,” he said : “The Bishop is coming in March.”

“Yes, Paul, I know,” replied the boy.

“Arthur, you know what I mean,” said Paul, anxiously.

“Yes, Paul, I know,” replied Arthur.

"Am I fit to stand among the Confirmation class?"

"You love the ways of God, Paul!"

"Oh! yes, Arthur, I do, indeed," he replied, with a quick turn of the head and a little smile.

"Then what detains you, Paul?"

"Why, Artie, just think how often I do wrong! Am I fit to profess a holy life?"

His reply was given in other words than his own:

"No strength of our own  
Or goodness we claim;  
Yet, since we have known  
The Saviour's great name,  
In this our strong tower  
For safety we hide,  
The Lord is our power  
The Lord will provide."

"Can you sing that, Paul?"

"Oh! yes, Arthur, I believe so," replied the boy in a choked voice, overcome now with the unanswerable reasoning of his friend.

"Then you have no more doubt?"

"No, but may I bear such honor?"

"Heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ,"

quoted Arthur, gently. "It is great honor, Paul, but he has given this to us. Are you not willing to receive it as the gift of God?"

Paul, with his face bowed upon the head of Arthur's couch, did not reply, and there was an anxious silence in the room for several minutes. Then Arthur raising himself brought his lips to the bowed forehead.

"Paul," he said, "you cannot refuse!"

"No," replied Paul, lifting his head and brushing away the tears. "I cannot, and I will not."

"And now," said Arthur, after a moment's silent clasp of the hand that was stretched out toward his:

"I have a favor to ask you, Paul. A very great favor."

"My dear Artie, if it is anything that I can do, you know, I shall be very glad."

"I think you may be the means of my getting what I want. You know, Paul, that I am growing weaker every day. Do not shake your head, you know it as well as I do. I have been longing to see the boys once more, and I thought I would get you to ask Mr. Halliday

if the class might not meet here next Saturday, before I am too weak to see them."

"Why, Artie," said Paul, "do you think you are strong enough now?"

"Yes, Paul, I think so, and it would give me so much pleasure. Will you ask Mr. Halliday?"

"Certainly, Artie, but why not ask him yourself?"

"Oh! I am afraid," replied the little boy, shaking his head and laughing.

So it came to pass, that Paul very modestly made his request, in Arthur's name, the very next day. Mr. Halliday was very much perplexed at first, and scarcely knew what to say, so he told him that he would decide, and let him know. At the same time, Paul told him of his determination to join the Confirmation class.

"I am rejoiced to know this, Paul," said Mr. Halliday, grasping his hand. "I have hoped it would be so. Did you tell Arthur of your determination? He and I were talking of you the other night."

"Yes, sir," replied Paul. "It is to Ar-

thur that I owe all the good motives I have. To him under God, I mean," he added, gravely.

"He is a most pure little Christian," said Mr. Halliday, turning away.

The more the young minister thought of it, the more he felt inclined to allow the little boy to have his wish. He knew from frequent expressions he had dropped, how he missed and longed for the services in which he could no longer join, and the class which had been such a delight to him while he was able to attend, was one of the things he wished for most. So having decided at length to allow the little boy his desire, he told him so one evening, just as he had finished reading, and had risen to go.

"I am so glad," said Arthur, the tears starting. "Give my love to the boys Mr. Halliday, and tell them how glad I shall be to see them all here."

He was barely strong enough when the day came, but he persuaded his mother to roll the great easy chair into the parlor, and prop him up there with pillows, so that he



could see and hear all that went on. He superintended the arrangement of the room himself, and when Mr. Halliday appeared, some time before the hour, he asked him if the boys might sing, and told him what he most wanted to hear.

He looked as he was, a very gentle, sweet child, as he sat there wrapped about with a delicately tinted gown, which Mrs. Atlaton had presented to him, with one hand resting on the soft folds, and the other supporting his head.

The lilies Hallie had brought him were not more fair than his face, resting against the pillows, although there was a look of fatigue already about his mouth, which said very plainly that he could not bear much.

It was a thing worth seeing, the greeting he gave the boys as they came in. Each one stepped forward to speak to him, and the smiles faded and the faces grew grave, as they noted the change a few weeks had wrought. He had a faint smile and greeting for every one, for he had learned them all, and there was not one there, and every variety was

represented among the thirty-five, but who would at that moment have given anything in the world for his little sick companion, so strikingly had he woven himself round their hearts.

Mr. Halliday stood near with a face full of emotion watching the scene, and presently, when he saw that the little boy was becoming weary, he commenced the service.

Very sweet, very solemn it was to-day. Mr. Halliday gave them a little talk as Paul had heard him once before, on the love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should "be called the sons of God." He told them how that love should be met and returned with their every-day holiness of life. Simply, but most earnestly he spoke, and Paul listened, feeling very happy that he had decided publicly to profess that allegiance. Arthur with his little weary face pillowed among the cushions, and his pleased eyes bent upon his pastor, listened and thought in how great measure that love of which he spoke had been bestowed upon him. The boys looked from the speaker's face to

that of Arthur, rightly, but unconsciously, judging the one to be fit commentary upon the other.

The Collect which ended the little talk, brought tears into more eyes than those two which were shaded by the pale hand.

“O God, who hast prepared for those who love thee such good things as pass man’s understanding; pour into our hearts such love towards thee, that we, loving thee above all things, may obtain thy promises which exceed all that we can desire; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

There was a moment’s pause, and then followed words given by lips which felt their significance.

“O Father of mercies and God of all comfort our only help in time of need; look down from heaven we humbly beseech thee, behold, visit, and relieve thy sick servant. Look upon him with the eyes of thy mercy; comfort him with a sense of thy goodness; preserve him from the temptations of the enemy; give him patience under his affliction; and, in thy good time, restore him to health;

and enable him to lead the residue of his life in thy fear and to thy glory: Or else, give him grace so to take thy visitation, that, after this painful life is ended, he may dwell with thee in life everlasting, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

"Arthur would like you to sing before you go," said Mr. Halliday, as the bowed heads were lifted. So the sweet voices rose in the words which Arthur had selected.

"O sing unto the Lord a new song," was the first, sung with all the power of their united voices, and upon this followed:

"I would not live always."

It was sung very tenderly and solemnly, as only those boys, with their eyes fixed upon the little figure before them, fading from earth, ready for heaven, could possibly have sung it.

"Are you strong enough to bid them good-night, Arthur?" asked Mr. Halliday, turning toward the still figure in the chair, as the notes died away.

Arthur roused then, and turning his gentle face toward them, said :

“Boys, it has given me great pleasure to see you all to day, and I thank you very much for coming. I shall never be back in my old seat to sing with you again, but if you ever think of me as having been there, let this thought come too ; that I felt when I no longer hear and join in the service in God’s holy temple, that I never had loved it half enough, and that for the good, through God, that it has been to me, I would not exchange the whole world. Good-night to you all.”

And when the boys knelt at the service that night, there was a holy light shone over the words they heard, which reflected from the child they had seen, whose face was even now touched with the glory he was soon to share. The service was never again to them the routine it had sometimes seemed before ; oh ! never again ! for they well knew how it had speeded one pure soul on its way heavenward.

## CHAPTER IX.

IT was about the same time in which the events I have been relating occurred, when Dr. Atherton finally concluded that Hallie was sufficiently strong to permit the operation to be safely performed upon her eyes. He was some time arriving at this decision, and having finally settled the matter, he wisely thought that the sooner it was over, the better it would be for all parties concerned.

Accordingly, on the Monday following the meeting of the class with Arthur, he quietly took his hat and walked over to Mrs. Kent's, just after he knew Paul and Hallie would have gone on their regular evening visit to Arthur. Mrs. Kent's face paled when she knew the doctor's errand, but she made no objection, knowing as she said, "that it has

got to come, some time, only," she added, "you must tell Hallie, yourself."

Now this was just what the doctor did not wish to do. The little girl was somewhat of a mystery to him, and he did not always know how to deal with her. He could not decide how she would be apt to take this announcement—whether with tears and a petition for longer waiting, or with determined will that would brave through the whole. He said as much, in substance, to Mrs. Kent, begging her to break the news, but she was inflexible.

"No, doctor," she said, "I know she would bear it calmly, but I have not the heart to tell her. I should break down myself, and that, you know, would only frighten her and spoil the whole thing."

The doctor felt the wisdom of this view of the case, and said but little more, but he felt far from easy with the task before him, and wondered when would be the best time to talk to her.

"I might see her to-night after service, I suppose," he mused, "but that might send

her home with fresh grief, and I have left the mother just ready to grieve with her. Clearly this will not do, for it would bring about a state of shattered nerves which would be very injurious. Then again, I might not tell her until the day arrives, but I am yet more afraid of a sudden shock. I cannot ask Bessie to break the news, for she has borne that burden once, and that is sufficient; and there is no one else who knows her so well as I do, and of whom she would not be afraid. At all events I'll go to the service." So to church he went, and taking a seat directly opposite Hallie, watched her throughout the service. Her face was very calm and placid to-night, and there was a bright bloom upon her cheeks, which the doctor had been working to bring there all these weeks, and which comforted him to behold. Yet, he sat there imagining how the sweet face would change and pale at the words he had to tell, and the soft lids droop as if to shield the wounded eyes, and the hands tremble and clasp each other—and what more! *That* the doctor could not tell. Had he known,



he would have been ready for his task ; as it was, he felt as though he were plotting some evil against her, and as soon as the blessing was pronounced, he hurried away through the darkness as though he thought some one was calling after him to come back and do his duty.

The next morning he regretted very much that he had delayed his words, not for any reason particularly, except for fear that the news might be too sudden after all, and because he still dreaded the task before him. When, however, he saw Hallie coming up the street that afternoon, with her sister, and saw her bid her good-bye at the gate, and leave the little girl to find her way to Paul, for whom she had come, it was the doctor who met her half-way between the gate and the house.

"Why, doctor, is that you?" she asked, brightly. "Where is brother Paul?"

"He is somewhere about," replied the doctor ; "but I wanted you a few minutes, so I came out for you myself."

"Well, sir, I am ready," she replied.

So he led her back into the snug office from which he had come, and put her on the lounge under the window, and sat down beside her.

"You are feeling quite well and strong now, are you not?" he asked, gently.

"Yes, sir, I am a great deal better."

"I asked you," he continued, watching her face anxiously, "because, Dr. Van Ratler and I have concluded that it is time we tried to restore to you your sight."

She caught her breath, and then replied, quietly :

"Yes, sir. When did you think of performing the operation?"

The doctor looking a little amazed, met her on her own ground and replied, gravely :

"We thought of to-morrow, at Mrs. Lawrence's house."

She grew pale even to her lips, and the clasp of her hands upon each other was very tight, and she breathed heavily for a moment. But then the doctor watched the blood come back, and the drooping eyes raise themselves, but did not recover himself from his marvel

at her self-command, until she said, very simply and quietly :

“Does my mother know of this?”

The doctor would have spoken some sympathizing words, but he did not dare to venture. “Yes, I gained her consent first,” was all he said.

“Will it not be too much trouble for Mrs. Lawrence?”

There was an instant's pause between every question.

“Mrs. Lawrence wished it so,” replied the doctor, “and your mother, as well as all the rest, decided that it was the most fitting place. You will probably remain there for some days afterwards, and I will bring your mother and Paul to you as often as you wish.”

She pondered this a little, and then asked, “Is mother going to Glenwood to-morrow?”

“Certainly.”

“Then it is all settled, I suppose,” she said, gathering up her gloves and book, and preparing to go.

“It only waits for your consent, Hallie,” said the doctor, gravely.

"*That* you had long ago," replied the little girl, with a faint smile. "I am ready. I have prayed for strength, and God will send it to me."

So sure was her trust! So utter her dependence! The Doctor could not fathom her at all. There was that about her of which he had caught glimpses from time to time in his brother—and in Paul, and which was utterly beyond his understanding.

He told her now that, "he was very glad to find that she felt as she did about it."

She smiled gently, at that, and rose to cross the room, but she had not gone five steps before she faltered, and would have fallen had not the doctor seen her hesitation, and sprang forward. It was the work of a minute to place her on the lounge, call Paul, and bring her some water; and when she opened her eyes again, she was held by the doctor's arm, while Paul sat close beside her, with one of her cold hands in his.

"Do you feel better?" was his first question.

"Yes, indeed," she replied. "I was dizzy for a minute, that was all, doctor"—turning

to him and speaking in a very humble way :  
"I am very sorry."

"Hallie," he replied, very much moved,  
"Do not say another word. You are both  
brave and good."

"Now, Paul," he continued, "it is time you  
were off, Arthur will want you awhile, and it  
is almost time for the bell to ring. No, my  
dear Hallie, you are not to go with him. I  
will take you home in the carriage presently."

"Doctor," said the little girl sitting upright,  
and the blood flushing into her cheeks, "If  
you do not let me go to Church, I cannot be  
with you to-morrow. Indeed, indeed, I can-  
not." She was very much in earnest.

"Hallie dear," said the Doctor soothingly,  
"you shall go if you feel well enough, but you  
must let me judge for you, and take you down  
in my carriage, when you are strong enough to  
move."

So Paul went off, and Hallie seeing that it  
depended upon her own efforts whether she  
attended the service, used the restoratives the  
doctor gave her very freely for a few minutes,

and so very soon looked almost as bright as she had done before she fainted.

The doctor, however, even then, ordered the carriage very reluctantly, and took the greatest possible care of Hallie, all the way down.

He made her sit then in the corner of the pew among the cushions, and having settled her to his satisfaction he seated himself where he could watch her. Not in the same way that he had done last evening, for she was pale again now, and he feared she would lose consciousness a second time. But Hallie knew just what she was doing. She felt that if she did not have the benefit of this service to-night, before the trial of the morning, she would be ill-fitted to bear it. She drank in every word, somewhat in the same way Arthur had done, during the last days he had been among them. The portion appointed for the Psalter this evening struck Hallie very forcibly, but she sang it—even when she thought of the morrow's pain—with her whole heart.

“O God, my heart is ready, my heart is ready. I will sing, and give praise with the best number that I have.”

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"For thy mercy is greater than the heavens, and thy truth reacheth unto the clouds."

The truth and love contained in the words went straight to Hallie's heart. She could, with Claribel, even amid tears, say, "Amen, Praise God," and she remembered that it was the affliction which "seemeth not joyous but grievous" which "worketh the peaceable fruits of righteousness."

The blood returned to her cheeks and fluttered no more, and the troubled face grew as calm as the face of a lake on a summer's day.

The prayer that had been the first to draw Paul's attention attracted her to-night, that God would "comfort and relieve" the sick and distressed, giving them "patience under their sufferings." She prayed here and afterward, with her whole heart, and when Mr. Halliday invoked upon them the "peace which passeth all understanding," she thought that God was giving it to her, and had she felt sure that this was to be her last day upon earth, she would still have brought the same

face away with her, that she did now; quiet, still, unruffled, happy, trustful, perfectly at peace. The Doctor was in a perfect maze. He was afraid as he touched her hands to lift her into the carriage, that she was something ethereal, that would fade away from him.

She was just the same when he came for her the next morning. Her mother and Mrs. Atherton accompanied her, and they were full of tender words of comfort and encouragement. The doctor was afraid they would do more harm than good, but it did not prove so, and when he lifted her out at Mrs. Lawrence's door, her face was just as usual, except that it was without a smile.

She was taken immediately to the library, only her mother following, and the one person who greeted her when there, was Dr. Van Raffer.

"Are you quite ready?" asked Dr. Atherton, who, although he thought himself hardened to anything, wished himself for a moment at the North Pole.

"Quite ready, I believe," replied Dr. Van Raffer, "will Hallie please take off her hat?"



The mother took her in charge, and with hands that would not cease trembling, tenderly unfastened her hat and cloak.

"Hallie," said the doctor, coming up to her, and speaking very gently, "are you willing to lie down on the table? I will take care of you."

"I am ready, doctor, for anything you wish," she replied, turning her little pale face for her mother to kiss.

The doctor rubbed his eyes fiercely for a moment to get the tears out of the way, and then lifting Hallie gently, he laid her on the long table.

We all know what such operations are. The long agony of suspense, the half-whispered, half-spoken words of the attendants, the smell of the opiate, the taking up and putting down of instruments, and to those who await the result, the agonizing silence. Hallie did not suffer very intensely, but it was the shadow of herself that was carried into one of the grand chambers and placed upon a bed of down. She was conscious, and

held her mother's hand, who—poor woman—was almost utterly unnerved.

Mrs. Lawrence came in by-and-by to look at her, and ask a question or two, as to any arrangements they might wish to effect. Dr. Van Ratler stood on the farther side of the bed, holding the little hand, and counting the pulsations at the wrist. By-and-by near night-fall when she was stronger, Paul came and kneeling on one side close to Hallie, asked her how she was. It was the first question that had been put to her.

"Paul, dear, I am very comfortable," she replied, "I am to stay here a few days until it is known whether or no the operation was successful. Ask Mrs. Lawrence to give you Arthur's flowers to-night. It is Wednesday, you know. Mother, I am feeling better."

"Darling, I am glad to hear you say so," replied the overjoyed mother.

Paul told her he would get the flowers, and then having kissed her gently, he stood looking at her with a very, very grave face, until the doctor told him it was time to go.

He stopped a moment on his way to church, to see Arthur—just a moment—and found him looking very wan and feeble.

Paul must fill Hallie's place to-night, and arrange the flowers, and he did it in a dainty, pretty way, which showed he loved the delicate things he handled; and he answered all Arthur's questions about Hallie, meanwhile.

"How good it is, Paul," he said, by-and-by, with those gentle blue eyes on the fire, and his thin fingers playing with a bit of heliotrope, "to know that you can go away to-night to the church, and leave your two sick ones with God—Hallie and me, you know. We are both in such safe hands."

"Oh! yes, Artie, what if we did not know that!" exclaimed the boy.

"We have only to thank God that we *do*, Paul."

"Yes, Artie, we can. With what hosts of promises God has shielded us.

"'Lo! I am with you always.'

"'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.'

“ ‘The Lord preserveth all them that love him.’

“ ‘He shall keep the feet of his saints.’

“ ‘He knoweth them that trust in him.’

“ ‘The angel of the Lord tarrieth round about them that fear Him.’

“ ‘They that seek the Lord God shall not want any thing that is good.’—And then as a full satisfaction :

“ ‘And we shall be ever with the Lord.’

“ ‘Paul, we have no right to be sorrowful ;  
sing,

‘Saviour who thy flock art feeding.’”

So he sang, gently dwelling upon the words he loved, so that when he had finished, the evening chimes were according with his notes.

“There are the chimes, dear Paul,” said Arthur, taking his hand, “and hark ! they are playing ‘Old Hundred.’ Oh ! Paul, why don’t all the bells in the world ring out.

‘Praise God from whom all blessings flow.’”

What sort of a heart do you think this boy with this day’s experience on his mind, carried with him into the church ?

I will tell you. With his burden of the two he loved so dearly lying—the one so sick and suffering, the other so far away from home—the one so near heaven, the other a patient saint on earth—the one, such a tender guide in the heavenward way, the other, such a shining light to brighten the road—the one so full of trust in God's mercy through Christ—the other, full this night with that peace which passeth all understanding—Paul's heart was overcharged with gratitude. He sank on his knees as he reached his seat, and amid his broken thanksgiving to God, the organ notes which blended in only helped on the prayer and praise. Paul wished that every one would join with him. He felt as if he must do something more than use the words of thanks. "O that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness!" These words came back to him to-night, and he could have shouted them.

This was Paul in the church. Hallie lying with tightly bandaged eyes, was going over and over in her mind the words of the 23d Psalm. "The Lord is my Shepherd."

"What are you thinking of Hallie?" asked the Doctor, who had come in for a moment.

So the little girl in a low tone gave the Psalm all through. "I was thinking, Doctor, she said, in what 'green pastures' and beside what 'still waters' God is leading me."

This was Hallie in her trouble. Arthur lay after his friend had gone looking at the fire and pondering the promises Paul had repeated, and especially the last one. "And we shall be ever with the Lord." He was trying to picture heaven, and wondering how much more beautiful it could be than some of his happy hours on this glorious earth, and gently through his mind ran the words.

"It was Heaven below,  
My Redeemer to know."

This was Arthur, so near to death. And God looked down out of heaven upon these three pure spirits, and claimed each for his own, for they "walked close with God."

## CHAPTER X.

**I** do not think in all Paul's after life that he ever ceased to remember the month of February that immediately preceded his confirmation. There was a halo around it that affected all the months and years which came after, and would cause him, whenever the thought of it occurred, to walk more soberly, and feel more deeply the great responsibility which was his as a child of God, and one of the witnesses of the religion of Christ. Never had a young Christian a better preparation for that solemn rite of laying on of hands. It was brought before him every day, and in such a manner, that he learned continually more and more the joy of serving the Master.

This was the way it happened. Arthur grew weaker and weaker as the days went on, and now never sat up, not even for the few

minutes that Mr. Halliday spent with him. He still saw all his friends, when they came, but their visits were necessarily shorter, as he was often in great pain and unable to say much. Yet his evening visits grew more and more dear to Paul in these days. Hallie was still at Glenwood. There was every hope of her recovery now, but they still kept the bandage over her eyes, and herself in a darkened room, until she should be strong and well. The days were very bright to her, for every one was very kind, and she had every thing her heart could wish to make her comfortable ; but Paul missed her unspeakably. To him she was the brightest sunshine of their home, and of late his best of little comforters. It was by no means pleasant to see her little lounging chair empty when he went in at night, and not to hear her voice in kindly greeting. He missed her most at the church, however. He had grown used to the absence of Arthur, and when anything occurred which particularly pleased him, he had been used to glance toward her, feeling sure that he would find, as he always did, his pleasure reflected there ;



and his walk homewards in the cold night air was very lonely, and he missed his two companions most sadly.

His life during the day, however, grew more and more pleasant. The Doctor, with his great big heart, saw just how it all was with Paul, and helped him on in every way that lay in his power. It was he who gained for Paul a daily visit to Glenwood. There were plenty of public conveyances running by the mansion towards the town; but the Doctor always ordered his horse and carriage to come for him in the afternoon, and it was Paul, of course, who must bring them. Then he would never let the boy miss one service at the cathedral. Somehow, he instinctively knew what these hours were to Paul, and what would not have been at all conducive to his own happiness, he gave the boy, honoring him for his firm faith in all holy things.

Then, too, the hours spent in the office often proved very precious to Paul. It was Mr. Halliday's constant reading place, and he would often throw his book aside and talk to Paul. Very comforting, loving talks they

often were, and they did more for Paul than almost anything else. He remembered long afterwards what he scarcely noticed at the time, that amid the bright, social chat there was between them, there would often be a few words dropped to help Paul on his heavenward way. He never seemed to lose sight of the fact that the boy was preparing to acknowledge his baptismal vows before the world, and often a little seemingly chance word, would remind him where he stood, and how solemn were the promises he was about to make his own.

Then the Saturday class in these days was something Paul would have been loath to give up. There were two or three of the choir boys beside himself who were candidates for Confirmation; and the whole class had grown to know how beautiful and lovely a thing it is to serve the Lord Jesus.

Since the meeting with Arthur, this had been particularly noticeable. These were boys full of the fresh life and animal spirits, which is characteristic of boys full of fun and play, loving merriment, and dreading school, seek-

ing liberty and restless under restraint. They were boys in every sense of the word, and they showed it in no plainer way than their attention to the meetings of the Saturday class. They knew better than any one could tell them, how great an interest their pastor took in them, and how he wished them to be just such boys as Arthur. They listened to his plain, simple talks to them, understanding every word, and determining to lead better lives. And those who did come, came with increasing pleasure and profit to these meetings, and those upon whose ears the words fell lightly, came I think, because they could not stay away.

But of all the bits of comfort that came to Paul, now, when he wanted all he could get, these moments with Arthur were the sweetest, and the most lasting. It was very plain to Arthur as well as to every one else, that the child's days were numbered, for he was very ill; but nothing hindered the pleasure of those who saw him. His face was just as placid, and his words as mild and gentle as they had ever been. To his friend, he was more than

ever could be told in words. Often he would ask Paul to do little things for him, to arrange a table that troubled his sick eyes, lift him and smooth his pillows, give him a little wine or often to toast him a tiny slice of bread, and bring it to him with a cup of his mother's tea. He would never have asked him, if he had not seen what a delight it was to Paul to serve him so, and in return there would often be gentle talk on various subjects, but oftener still upon the theme of which they never tired, Jesus. Then there was always a hymn at the close, oh! how the words and tunes used to make Paul's heart ache long afterwards, and of late the sick boy would ask for a prayer before Paul went, and the church Collects grew very precious.

"Paul," said Arthur, on one of these evenings, just as his friend was preparing to say good night, "you remember and give my love to Hattie, always, do you not?"

"Yes, Artie, certainly, and she told me to-day to tell you, that she hoped to see you very soon."

"I wonder if she ever will," said Arthur, with his blue eyes raised to his friend's face.

"Oh! I hope so, Artie. She is so longing to see your face."

"I am so happy that she will have the light once more," replied the boy. "You must bring her to see me, if I am still here, as soon as she is able, Paul."

And it was Hallie's greatest wish. You know she had not been always blind, although it had been a long time since she had seen clearly, and she had never known Arthur's face, and as she heard how rapidly he failed, it seemed as if she could not wait. At length, one afternoon when the Doctor and Paul had come up together, and she met them at the door of her room, seemingly very bright and happy, the Doctor told her he thought she might come out of the darkness to-day. She caught his hand with an exclamation of joy.

"Right away? Now?" she asked, joyfully.

"Yes, right away, now," returned the doctor, laughing.

So the three went into the library, where Mrs. Lawrence was, and the Doctor gently

unfastened the bandage. Very cautiously, a little at a time he let the light come, but they had waited a long time, and the eyes were quite strong, she had been without the bandage in a dark room before. When it was well off, the doctor said, "now you may look up."

And she did, straight up into the Doctor's face, with her heart all in her eyes. Such a look as she gave him! There was every thing in it, but gratitude most of all.

"Well," said he lightly; "what do you think of me Hallie?"

She caught his hand between her own, and carried it to her lips. "Oh, Dr. Atherton," she said, "I knew you would have the kindest face in all the world, and now I see it!"

The Doctor's eyes fell, and his handsome mouth twitched and quivered with feeling. It was his reward, and it was well worth having.

But Hallie had her arms about Paul's neck now, and was laughing and crying both together.

"My dear Paul, you've grown handsome,"

she said, drawing herself back to look at him. "Oh! it is so long since I've seen you."

But just at that moment her mother opened the door, and came in, and then the child sprang, and for a moment neither knew anything else in the world, beside each other.

Afterwards Mrs. Lawrence claimed Hallie's attention, and little Mabel, and the beautiful massive house with which she had become so familiar, I cannot tell you what it was to her. I do not know the half, nor do you, and we never can unless God sees fit to take away from us that greatest of blessings—sight, and in restoring it causes us to live life over anew. Just think what every little thing must have been to her! The articles she knew from touch, the flowers, the books, the furniture, her own dress, and above all the loved faces!

"And now," she said, at last, stopping before the great picture I told you of, and in which one figure even to her eyes so strikingly represented her idea of the one she so longed to see now; "I must go and see Arthur."

"Yes," replied the Doctor, kindly, "you

shall go down with Paul and me to-night, if you wish, and stop there on your way home."

"And then to church! O, Doctor, please!"

He did not wish it, but he could not resist the pleading face, and so, by-and-by, when she had taken another delighted look over the library room, where she had of late spent so many pleasant hours, and bidden Mrs. Lawrence a very affectionate good-bye, the Doctor fastened the bandage on again, and took her in his carriage towards the town.

What a happy little girl she was, and what care she had from both her companions, one of whom could not keep his eyes from his sister's face, or drop the little hand he held, and it was he who lifted her down at Arthur's door and carried her in.

She came like a vision to the sick boy. He lay there listening to the commotion outside, and wondering if the Doctor had come with Paul, when the boy ran in and placed Hallie in an easy chair by the fire.

"Why, little Hallie! Come here and let me see you," he exclaimed, joyfully.



But she waited a moment, until the Doctor, who had followed them in, had unfastened the bandage again, and then she took quick steps to Arthur's couch. He drew her down immediately and kissed her very lovingly, and then she lifted her face, and looked at him long and steadily, until finally, seizing his hand, and scarce restraining the tears, she cried out :

"Oh! Artie, Artie, you are too near heaven! The light is on your face now. Can you not stay with us a little longer?"

She saw how close the life beyond was, perhaps better than any one else could have done, for it was the gradual growth of days and weeks to them, while to her it was fearfully sudden.

The Doctor feared the effect of her words upon Arthur, and hastened to the other side of his couch. The little boy heard, and for one moment he clung to earth, and then with a gentle smile and a loving look into the kind eyes glancing down at him, he said :

"What must it be tacer, Hallie!" Then after a minute, he added, brightly, "Look

around now and tell me how you like my room, and Paul's arrangement of my flowers. He has had your task since you have been away."

And upon this followed a few minutes of very bright talk between the two, and afterwards Paul must sing, which he did, giving the words a wistful intonation which showed how very much he longed for that of which he sang :

"Oh ! for a closer walk with God,  
A calm and heavenly frame,  
A light to shine upon the road,  
That leads me to the Lamb."

"Now Paul, we must go," said the Doctor, as Paul finished, more moved by the scene than he liked to own.

"One minute, Doctor," said Arthur, catching his hand. "Paul, have you a prayer for me to-night?"

Paul did not hesitate, but kneeling beside the couch he spoke humbly and very devoutly :

"O Almighty God, who has knit together Thine elect in one communion and fellowship

in the mystical body of Thy Son Christ our Lord, grant us grace so to follow Thy blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those unspeakable joys which Thou hast prepared for those who unfeignedly love Thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

The Doctor rose from his knees more of a Christian than he had ever been in his life before.

Then they went to the evening service. Hallie caught her breath with utter delight and wonder when they entered the church, and she could not remember that she breathed again during the service. How her eyes sought out Paul from among the white-robed figures that filed into their seats! How she watched the flickering light from the great window fall upon the stone pavement, and drank in every expression of Mr. Halliday's mild, beautiful face, as he read the sweet words of the evening service!

Every one who saw her—and there was scarcely a person present who did not watch her—was touched by the changing expressions

her face wore. And when the sun just at its setting came from underneath a cloud, and striking through the great window, sent a shower of colors over the floor, and rested in beautiful purple on the open Bible from which Mr. Halliday read, she uttered a little cry of wonder and pleasure.

No one smiled. Some few stealthily wiped away tears, and Mr. Halliday faltered in his reading for a moment, but when he continued, the words were given in a touched voice, but still in a way which left no one in doubt as to what they were to him.

"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God."

And Paul looking down into Hallie's sensitive face, and meeting those tender blue eyes, thought to himself, with a grateful sense of his abundant blessings:

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

## CHAPTER XI.

**T**HE morning of the first Sunday in March was one of those forerunners of Spring, which come to us sometimes with a breath of sweetness in which all the joy of the coming Summer is mingled.

To Paul, as he stood at his window in the morning light—it was almost perfect—for he felt all the joy the day must bring to him.

When he had been over to see Arthur the night before, the little boy was full of delight at a visit which the Bishop and Mr. Halliday had been making him ; “and oh ! Paul,” he said, in his tender, feeble way, “to have your baptismal vows sealed in the sacred rite of Confirmation will be beautiful, indeed !” And Paul thought of it now, as he stood there by his window, with the warm air fanning his black curls, and bringing to his senses the

perfume of the woods through which it had come; with his eyes fixed upon the towers of the Cathedral he loved so well. He felt how great a privilege was his to-day, and at the same time how heavy a responsibility rested upon him as a member of God's church—His visible sign on earth.

He knelt where he stood, and prayed that God would support him during the day, and stay close beside him in his journey in the narrow road, and then longing for help he knew not how to express, he spoke in perfect words—words that have rung through the ages—first uttered by Him who “spoke as never man spoke,” and the power, the beauty, the comprehensiveness of which were fully understood only by Him. But they have stilled and soothed many a tired spirit, and even the opening words give the spirit rest:

“Our Father who art in Heaven”

The Confirmation was to take place at the evening service, but the Bishop was at the church in the morning, and the whole day seemed but a part of the beautiful ordinance

with which it was to close. The service was very simple, for they were in Lent now, and there was less than the usual music; but it carried Paul heavenward. He could scarcely like the break that occurred at noon-time, and almost wished he could have stayed in the great church all the day.

It was in a very peaceful, happy frame of mind, however, that he took his prayer-book in his hand and went over to see Arthur, just before the service, in anticipation of which his heart was throbbing already.

When he had laid down his book and come up to Arthur's couch, he was shocked at the little boy's appearance. The shadow of death was upon him now, and Paul had thought him sleeping, but he opened his eyes as Paul's lip touched his forehead, and smiled gently and sweetly.

"I'm almost home, Paul," he said, faintly.

Paul leaned over him in an agony of fear.

"Are you so much worse, Artie?" he asked.

"I think it is better, Paul," he replied, speaking with great effort; "for I am going

to be with Christ, and that, you know, is far better."

"Artie, oh! not yet," said his grief-stricken mother, who sat near, fanning him.

"It must be, mother, dear," replied the feeble voice, "but to me to die is gain, you know."

Paul was stunned. He had been expecting this a long time, but now when it came, it was more than he could bear.

"Paul," said the gentle child, seeing how pained his friend was, "you must read to me."

So the boy found the Bible, and read as Arthur indicated, and so he was comforted. Yes, his heart was utterly laid at rest, for the selections Arthur made were enough to still any one, even the most grief-stricken. Words of cheer and comfort, that have eased many a weary soul, and sent dying laurels out on the great river of death as happily and calmly as if it were not a dark stream from which

"Timorous mortals start and shrink."

He read the third chapter of the 1st Epistle of John, then the ninety-first Psalm, then the



eighth chapter of Romans, and finally the forty-second Psalm. Was it any wonder that when the book was closed, Paul could look into the face which should answer to his greeting oh! such a little while! without a change of manner?

"You can go through life and through death trusting in those words, Paul," said the sick boy, faintly.

Paul gave him a word or two of loving reply, and then sat still, softly fanning him and watching the spark of life glow more and more faintly. Such a preparation for the Confirmation! Such a solemn laying on of the hands of grief!

The little boy was almost past suffering—except that of the heavily drawn breath which—oh! may God spare us such suffering—had been his daily burden for months—and he lay there with those calm blue eyes fixed alternately upon his mother and Paul, and with a brow so peaceful and serene, that it seemed as if the heaven-gates were already open, and the light of the Celestial City was beaming down upon him.

By-and-by he said, softly, "Paul, dear, sing."

Paul complied, but it took all his self-control to summon courage to commence. And here, as before, the words stilled him.

"Jesus, Saviour of my soul,  
Let me to Thy bosom fly,  
While the waves of trouble roll,  
While the tempest still is high;  
Hide me, O my Saviour, hide,  
Till the storm of life is past;  
Sail into the haven guide;  
O receive my soul at last."

"That is very beautiful," he said. "Now, 'Rock of ages,'" and Paul sang that, too.

He lay quite still afterwards for some minutes, and then he said: "Paul, come close to me," and his friend knelt close by his side.

"It is the last time, dear Paul," he said, his tiny, white, emaciated hand touching Paul's black curls.

"Oh, Artie, do not say so!" cried the boy, striving to keep back the tears.

"Yes, Paul, but it is, you know, and I have a word to say before I go away. Mother

wants my surplice. Will you bring it home? It hangs next your own. Mother would like to keep it."

"I will, Artie, dear," said the boy.

"Thank you. Then tell the boys, if they feel sorry, that it is far better, for I shall be at home. Then the Doctor, dear and kind as he has been, give him the Prayer-book he gave to me, with my love, and tell him it is more dear to me than anything else, except my Bible. Thank Mrs. Atherton and Mrs. Lawrence for their flowers. They were very sweet to me. And to Hallie, Paul, give my very dear love, and tell her that she must fill my place in your heart. Dear little Hallie!"

He had a word for his mother then, who was standing on the other side of him, and Paul who was weeping sorrowfully, had a moment in which to still his grief.

"And now, Paul," he said, turning to him again, "I have not much more strength, but I have just a little word to say. You have been very dear to me, more precious than I can rightly tell you—almost next my mother

in my regard—and it is one of the greatest joys I have, that I leave you just here, and now on the eve of your Confirmation. When the blessing of the Holy Spirit is invoked, I will be there in spirit near you, and in the closing verses of the hymn I will sing, too. I need not tell you that you have chosen well. Your own heart tells you that. Love the church for my sake, as well as your own. Now, dear, let me hear the prayer.”

“Grant we beseech Thee Almighty God, that like as we do believe Thy only begotten Son to have ascended in the heavens, so we may also in heart and mind thither ascend, and with him continually dwell, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one God world without end. Amen.”

“O God the king of glory who hast exalted thine only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph into Thy kingdom in heaven; we beseech Thee leave us not comfortless, but send to us thine Holy Ghost to comfort us and exalt us unto the same place whither our Saviour Christ is gone before; who liveth

and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one God world without end. Amen."

"Hark!" said Arthur, after a minute's pause. There was a breathless silence, and out upon the night came borne to them softly, by the wind, the evening chimes gently striking to the tune of Saxony:

"God shall charge his angel legions,  
Watch and ward o'er thee to keep;  
Though thou walk through hostile regions,  
Though in desert wilds thou sleep

"Snee with pure and firm affection,  
Thou on God hast set thy love,  
With the wings of his protection,  
He will shield thee from above."

"It is the chimes. I thought for a minute it was the heaven-bells. Paul, dear Paul, kiss me, for you must go."

They held each other very close for a moment, the kisses were given, and then with one long, lingering look, Paul tore himself away, and rushed out into the air, with a breaking heart.

"Mother, what is the matter with Paul?" whispered Hallie, as the boys in their white

vestments passed out. "He looks white and sick, and his head is bent."

He never lifted his eyes but once after he took his seat, and then it was to ascertain that the Bishop had entered with Mr. Halliday. He did not sing, for he could not, and his eyes seemed attracted and held by those tablets which uttered so much to-night. "Asleep in Jesus," one said. How soon would one of his dear ones be so sleeping! "Rest in Peace." Sweetly and peacefully little Arthur would rest; but when his friend thought that he might never again meet his gentle smile, his head was bowed.

He listened to the service as well as he could, with a pained remembrance of the time when Arthur hearkened beside him. The chapter this evening—the fourth of Ephesians—with its solemn warnings and advice, softened his heart, and he was weeping all through the prayers. It so happened that on this night, as once before, there were prayers for a family in affliction, and the words were like sharp blades going through the heart that listened, and he could not for his tears say

“Amen.” Would not these words be for him soon? Were they not, now?

“O merciful God and heavenly Father, who hast taught us in Thy holy word that Thou dost not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men; look with pity, we beseech Thee, upon the sorrows of Thy servants for whom our prayers are desired. In Thy wisdom Thou hast seen fit to visit them with trouble, and to bring distress upon them. Remember them O Lord in mercy; sanctify Thy fatherly correction to them; endue their souls with patience under their affliction, and with resignation to thy blessed will; comfort them with a sense of Thy goodness; lift up Thy countenance upon them, and give them peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

The sermon left Paul time to become comparatively calm, and when at length, during the hymn, the candidates came forward to their places, three of the surpliced singers were among the number. Paul, feeling that he had very little strength, stood by the font, his hand touching it for support. He gave

one glance toward Mr. Halliday, enough to see with what eyes of love and rejoicing he looked from one to another of those who stood there, and then his thoughts went heavenward, and stayed there while he knelt, and after the manner of the Holy Apostles, the Bishop's hands rested on his head in blessing.

"Defend, O Lord, this Thy child with Thy heavenly grace, that he may continue Thine forever, and daily increase in Thy Holy Spirit more and more until he come unto Thy everlasting kingdom."

And his little companions in the choir, their voices touched with the feeling wrought by the solemn service, and the placing of hands upon the head of one of their own number, sweetly and tenderly chanted, "Amen."

And Paul—the boy who thus before the world, acknowledged his allegiance to his Lord and Master, and publicly confessed the faith of Christ crucified—felt through his soul the "peace which passeth all understanding."



When they rose to their feet a few moments after, Paul listened very intently while the charge was given. "I see that some of you are youthful," said the aged Bishop; "and to these particularly I would say, that their duty now becomes a very solemn one. There are many temptations which come to young Christians, that are often very hard to resist. It becomes you then to become very "strong in the Lord of hosts," to place your entire dependence upon Him who gave Himself for you, to "deal justly, love mercy and walk humbly with your God."

And then Paul went back to his seat, and sang with the rest, with his heart in the words, the concluding verses of the hymn,

"Strong in the Lord of hosts,  
And in the mighty power,  
Who in the strength of Jesus trusts,  
Is more than conquerer."

But he missed the hand that should have clasped his in tender sympathy with his joy, and the loving eyes which would have been lifted to his in mute gladness. Where were they now?

His joyful, upward look faded as he thought, and it was with a most sad face that after one look about the grand old church with its solemn aisles and huge columns, its lofty arches and gorgeous windows, and a moment's hearkening to the soft notes dying away into space, Paul stepped out into the street.

"My dear Paul," said Mr. Halliday's voice at his elbow, "the Bishop and I are going over to see Arthur a few minutes. Will you not go with us?"

"Yes, sir," replied the boy, "I was just on my way there, but oh! sir—" and Paul broke down, for he was sobbing.

"Paul, what's the matter," said Mr. Halliday, "has anything happened to Arthur?"

"I do not dare go back, sir. He said it was the last time, when I was there to-night."

Mr. Halliday uttered an exclamation of sorrow, and the three hurried on towards the house, where lay the boy who was so dear to all who knew him.

Such a walk as it was! There were but few words spoken, and these only chimed in with their thoughts.

"Paul, it did my heart good to see you where you were to-night," said Mr. Halliday, clasping the boy's hand.

"God tempers the wind, Mr. Halliday," was the reply. "It was the only thing that could have supported me under Arthur's increasing illness."

This was all that passed, and they walked on through the now rapidly darkening streets, with sobered faces. Paul's new allegiance came to his heart now and then, with a feeling of great thankfulness and joy, which served to steady his heart under its trial.

At the door of the little home so familiar to Paul's feet, they paused, and Paul, pushing open the unlatched door, stepped in. His friends followed as he crossed the hall, and so on into the tiny sitting-room; which had grown to be such a holy place to Paul. Very still and quiet it was here now. The fire burning and crackling in the grate was the only sound that broke the silence. There was no one there, except that the lounge held its usual little figure. Paul stepped softly but quickly forward, and looked at the little face

which lay back upon the pillows, with a calm, sweet look about the mouth, and the lines of pain all gone. With a cry of pain and anguish, Paul touched the tiny hand, which lay on the coverlet, and then sank down upon his knees, still clasping it though it would never again return his pressure, and he wept as though his heart would break.

Mr. Halliday was on the other side, gazing down into the little dead face, with trembling lips, and a face full of sorrow, and the Bishop stood beside him, and studied the tiny figure, thinking how true it was that there was "no sting in death." Not here! No one could look upon this body from which the pure spirit had fled, and feel that the departure had been a struggle. The gentle face that his friends had loved to watch, was still here, and added to it something more which told them he had seen heaven while yet his soul lingered.

"And so He giveth his beloved sleep," said the Bishop, solemnly. "I think we may envy him instead of sorrowing."

Mr. Halliday stooped and gently detached

from the hand which lay nearest him, a tiny slip of paper, on which was written a few words. He read them, and then with an almost awe-struck face, carried them round to where Paul still knelt in his grief.

"Paul, my dear boy," he said, "Arthur has left a word for you."

The boy lifted his head, and took the little paper from Mr. Halliday, and wiping the tears away, read :

"DEAR PAUL :

'It was heaven below

My Redeemer to know.'"

With a fresh burst of grief he hid his face again, but with every tear, came a sure knowledge that these words spoken from the spirit land, were most true of Arthur, and the tears were almost joyful, when he humbly hoped they were true of himself also.

And when the words that followed broke the stillness, they did not jar or fall harshly upon the tender heart; but Paul well remembering the night when his little friend had used them with a sure knowledge of this day,

and a welcoming of it that had so awed and quieted him then, bent his head lower, and echoed every word of that precious Collect:

“Grant, O Lord, that as we are baptized into the death of Thy blessed Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, as by continual mortifying our corrupt affections we may be buried with him; and that through the grave and gate of death, we may pass to our joyful resurrection, for his merits who died and was buried, and rose again for us, Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord.”

And Paul thought he almost heard a little seraph's voice chanting the “Amen.”

THE END.

